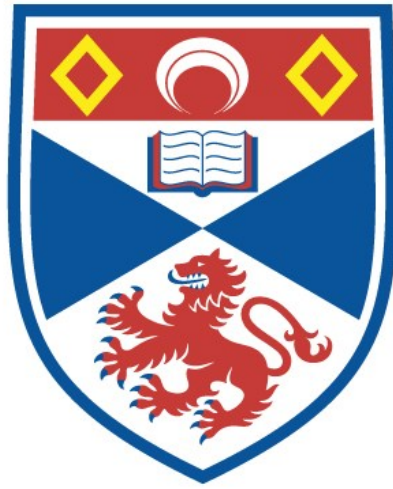


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# **JESUS AS A NONVIOLENT REVOLUTIONARY**

**A Study in the Functional Christology of the Book of Revelation**

**Mark Bredin**

**Degree: Doctor of Philosophy**

**Date of Submission: 12 January 2000**





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## ABSTRACT

*B believes that the Jesus of Revelation is a nonviolent revolutionary in the tradition that can be compared to that of Gandhi's understanding of a revolutionary and one that is in no way a digression from the Jesus of the gospels. In the Introduction the earliest evidence about Jesus presenting him as such is examined. The thought of Gandhi is the model to which Revelation's Jesus will be compared. The dominant methodology for the thesis is to begin with the cultural and religious traditions of John which were crucial to the way John saw his particular setting. Consequently, Jesus is presented in the light of tradition, but developed in conflict with those who disagreed and rejected John's understanding of Jesus. Therefore, in chapter 1 OT traditions that are hostile to plunder and oppression, traditions to which John was influenced, are examined. Chapter 2 explores the way in which martyrdom is a response to the antagonist who oppresses the people. Chapters 3 and 4 present traditions from the OT and later Jewish literature that show suffering and martyrdom as ways of witness against oppression and plunder. Chapters 5 and 6 show that the social setting to which John responded was one that was based on violence and oppression, and John's response is a nonviolent witness in order to persuade people away from violence, suffering and martyrdom in the tradition of the suffering Jewish witnesses of tradition. Chapters 7-12 assess John's presentation of Jesus as 'faithful witness', 'pierced servant', 'son of man', 'lamb' and 'rider', while exploring such descriptions against the OT imagery and in response to Jewish expectations of a military messiah and the particular social setting. Overall, Jesus is a martyr figure who dies out of love for the world.*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks for the accessible and rigorous eye of my supervisor, Professor Richard Bauckham, from whom I have learned much about the Book of Revelation and New Testament criticism. Also a special thanks to Margaret Barker for our long phone calls, her hospitality and support throughout the labour of this thesis as well as her significant scholarship.

The writing of any thesis usually makes demands upon the writer's close family, there is no exception in this case. I thank my wife, Fran, for all her patient help and support, and my daughters, Hannah and Charis as they have at times taken second place to the writing of this work and have had to wait many a time to get on to the computer!

Finally, I dedicate this thesis to the memory of my father, Robert George Bredin (1934-1994).

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## Abbreviations

### Abbreviations for ancient literature

|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| Adv.Haer       | Irenaeus Against All Heresies                       |
| Ann            | Tacitus' Annals of Rome                             |
| BCE            | Before the Common Era                               |
| BDB            | Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew-English Lexicon |
| b. Sanh        | Babylonian Talmud tractate Sanhedrin                |
| b. Sotah       | Babylonian Talmud tractate Sotah                    |
| b. Yoma        | Babylonian Talmud tractate Yoma                     |
| CD             | Damascus Rule                                       |
| CE             | Common Era  |
| Col            | Colossians  |
| 1 Cor          | 1 Corinthians                                       |
| 1 Chron        | 1 Chronicles  |
| 2 Chron        | 2 Chronicles  |
| Dan            | Daniel  |
| Deut           | Deuteronomy   |
| Dom            | Suetonius' Domitian in <i>The Twelve Caesars</i>    |
| EH             | Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History                    |
| Ep (see Pliny) | Pliny's (the Younger) Epistles                      |
| Eph            | Ephesians   |
| Ex             | Exodus  |
| Ex.R.          | Midrash Rabbah on Exodus                            |
| Ezek           | Ezekiel   |
| 6 Ezra         | Chapters 15-16 of 4 Ezra                            |
| Frag.Targ      | Fragment Targum                                     |
| Gal            | Galatians   |
| Gen            | Genesis   |
| Gen.R          | Midrash Rabbah on Genesis                           |
| Heb            | Hebrew  |
| Hos            | Hosea   |
| Is             | Isaiah  |
| Jer            | Jeremiah  |
| Jos Ant        | Josephus' Antiquities                               |
| Josh           | Joshua  |
| JT             | Jesus Tradition                                     |
| Jub            | Jubilees  |
| Judg           | Judges  |
| LAB            | Pseudo-Philo, <i>Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum</i>  |
| Lam            | Lamentations  |
| Lev            | Leviticus   |
| Lk             | Luke  |
| LXX            | Septuagint  |
| 1 Macc         | 1 Maccabees   |
| 2 Macc         | 2 Maccabees   |
| 4 Macc         | 4 Maccabees   |



|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| Mal           | Malachi   |
| Matt          | Matthew   |
| Mk            | Mark  |
| Mich          | Micah   |
| MT            | Massoretic text of the Hebrew Bible               |
| M. Tamid      | Mishnah tractate Tamid                            |
| Nah           | Nahum   |
| NH            | Pliny's (the Elder) Natural History               |
| NT            | New Testament                                     |
| Num           | Numbers   |
| Num.R         | Midrash Rabbah on Numbers                         |
| 1 Pet         | 1 Peter   |
| PH            | Melito's Paschal Homily                           |
| Pliny Ep      | Pliny (the Younger) Epistles                      |
| PRK           | Pesikta de Rab Kahana                             |
| Prov          | Proverbs  |
| Ps.Jon        | Targum Pseudo-Jonathan                            |
| Ps, Pss       | Psalms  |
| PsSol         | Psalms of Solomon                                 |
| PT            | Palestinian Targum                                |
| OAN           | Oracles Against the Nations                       |
| OT            | Old Testament                                     |
| 1QH           | Hodayot (Thanksgiving Hymns) from Cave 1          |
| 1QM           | Milhamah (War Scroll) from Qumran Cave 1          |
| 1QpHab        | Peshar om Habakkuk from Qumran Cave 1             |
| 1QS           | The Community Rule from Cave 1                    |
| 1QSb          | Blessings from Qumran Cave 1                      |
| 4Q225         | Pseudo-Jubilees from Cave 4                       |
| 4Q521         | Messianic Apocalypse                              |
| Rev           | Revelation  |
| RH            | Dio Cassius' Roman History                        |
| Rom           | Romans  |
| RSV           | Revised Standard Version                          |
| 1 Sam         | 1 Samuel  |
| Sib.Or        | Sibylline Oracles                                 |
| Sir           | Ben Sira (Ecclesiasticus)                         |
| Tacitus Hist  | Tacitus' Histories                                |
| T.Bcn         | Testament of Benjamin                             |
| T.Jos         | Testament of Joseph                               |
| T.Mos         | Testament of Moses                                |
| 1 Tim         | 1 Timothy   |
| Vesp          | Suetonius' Vespasian in <i>The Twelve Caesars</i> |
| Wis           | Wisdom of Solomon                                 |
| Yalk.Shimeoni | Yalkut Shimeoni                                   |
| Zech          | Zechariah   |
| Zeph          | Zephaniah   |

## Abbreviations for serial publications

|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| AB        | Anchor Bible   |
| AnBib     | Analecta Biblica   |
| AUSS      | Andrews University Seminary Studies                          |
| BETL      | Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologiarum Lovaniensium            |
| BNTC      | Black's New Testament Commentaries                           |
| BTB       | Biblical Theological Bulletin                                |
| BZNW      | Beihefte zur ZNW   |
| CBQ       | Catholic Biblical Quarterly                                  |
| CQR       | Church Quarterly Review                                      |
| CUP       | Cambridge University Press                                   |
| EQ        | Evangelical Quarterly  |
| ET        | Evangelical Times  |
| HNT       | Handbuch zum Neuen Testament                                 |
| HTR       | Harvard Theological Review                                   |
| Int       | Interpretation   |
| IBS       | Irish Biblical Studies                                       |
| ICC       | International Critical Commentary                            |
| JBL       | Journal of Biblical Literature                               |
| JETS      | Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society               |
| JJS       | Journal of Jewish Studies                                    |
| JQR       | Jewish Quarterly Review                                      |
| JRS       | Journal of Roman Studies                                     |
| JSHRZ     | Jüdische Schriften aus hellenistisch-römischer Zeit          |
| JSJ       | Journal for the Study of Judaism                             |
| JSJS      | Supplement Series of JSJ                                     |
| JSNT      | Journal for the Study of the New Testament                   |
| JSNTSup   | Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series |
| JSOT      | Journal for the Study of the Old Testament                   |
| JSP       | Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigraph                   |
| JTS       | Journal of Theological Studies                               |
| MNTC      | Moffat's New Testament Commentary                            |
| NBC       | New Bible Commentary   |
| NCB       | New Century Bible  |
| Nov.T     | Novum Testamentum  |
| NTS       | New Testament Studies  |
| ÖTK       | Ökumenischer Taschenbuch-Kommentar                           |
| OUP       | Oxford University Press                                      |
| PIBA      | Proceedings of the Biblical Association                      |
| RTP       | Revue de théologies et de philosophie                        |
| SBFLA     | Studii biblici franciscani liber Testament                   |
| SBL       | Society of Biblical Literature                               |
| SBLDS     | SBL Dissertation Series                                      |
| ScripBull | Scripture Bulletin   |
| SNTSMS    | Society for the New Testament Studies Monograph Series       |
| SVTP      | Studia in Veteri Testamenti Pseudepigrapha                   |
| TDNT      | Theological Dictionary of the New Testament                  |
| TU        | Texte und Untersuchungen                                     |

|                |  |
|----------------|--|
| VC             | Vigilae chistianae                                 |
| VT             | Vetus Testamentum                                  |
| WBC            | Word Biblical Commentary                           |
| WestTheolJourn | West Theological Journal                           |
| ZAW            | Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft |
| ZNW            | Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche               |

## INTRODUCTION

This thesis aims to demonstrate that the Jesus of Revelation is not distinctive from the Jesus of the gospels. Jesus is a nonviolent revolutionary who witnesses in word and in his death showing love and forgiveness to his antagonist.

### 1. *Jesus: A Nonviolent Revolutionary*

This thesis might be thought of as a reconstruction of the prophet John's understanding of the earthly Jesus, presupposing that John sought to make Jesus relevant to himself and those to whom he wrote in the light of their own culture and tradition and particular social setting. Revelation is often seen in scholarship as concerned with the exalted and coming Christ as well as the identification of Jesus with God, rather than the Jesus who lived, taught and died. The exalted, coming Christ is indeed prominent in Revelation, yet this Christ cannot be understood apart from or separated from the Jesus who lived, taught and died. Christ on the throne of God is the slaughtered Lamb. Moreover, as Bauckham comments, the humanity of Jesus is emphasised throughout Revelation in the fourteen occurrences of the name 'Jesus', and in the presentation of Jesus as a human witness whose witness his followers must continue.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, this thesis is concerned with the area of functional christology.

*Revelation and Jesus Tradition (J1)*. It is probable that John had knowledge of what Jesus did and taught. It is understood here that John is representative of the earlier prophetic tradition who relied upon early *logia* which were central to the forming of

---

<sup>1</sup> Bauckham, (1993b) 66.

the Synoptic tradition.<sup>2</sup> Yet, as Bauckham points out, the words of Christ reported in Revelation cannot be located in the Synoptic tradition, but reflect more John's concern with Jesus being relevant to the situation of the churches (see 1.17-3.22; 16.15; 22.7, 12-16, 20).<sup>3</sup> To what extent did John know about Jesus? Bauckham detects within Revelation a small number of *logia* which belong to the tradition of the words of Jesus. Generally it is accepted that John knew Synoptic traditions in forms independent of the written Gospels.<sup>4</sup> Bauckham, for example, presents his argument that Rev.3.3, 20 and 16.15 depend on the Synoptic parables of the Thief and the Watching servants.<sup>5</sup>

a. *Prominence of Nonviolent Teaching in JT.*<sup>6</sup> Jesus' teachings were well known even

---

<sup>2</sup> Bauckham, (1993a) 93; Hill, (1971-72) 406-411 suggests that John was not simply an early Christian prophet among others but a unique prophet with more in common with OT prophecy; Aune, (1983) 274-288 has emphasized the prophetic nature of the book; for a summary of current views regarding the nature of Revelation as prophecy see Aune, (1997) lxxv-lxxvi; Maazzaferri, (1989) argues that Revelation is not at all an apocalypse but belongs to the genre of OT prophetic writings; Fekkes, (1993) has also emphasized the nature of Revelation as prophecy.

<sup>3</sup> Bauckham, (1993a) 93.

<sup>4</sup> Vos, (1965) is the only systematic treatment of Revelation's relation to the Synoptic tradition. Bauckham, (1993a) 94 accepts also the importance of the Synoptic tradition but not, necessarily as does Vos, i.e. as a 'fixed tradition'. Rather, Bauckham suggests an understanding of a fluid tradition of sayings.

<sup>5</sup> Bauckham, (1993a) 96; see also Jeremias, (1972) 55 *vis-à-vis* Rev.3.20; Kiddle, (1940) 60; Vos, (1965) 97-100.

<sup>6</sup> The question as to whether Jesus taught nonviolence as well as his relationship with Jewish resistance movements against Rome has been much discussed: see especially Brandon, (1967) who argues that Jesus and his disciples sympathized with the ideals and aims of the Zealot movement;

though rarely quoted in the NT. This is illustrated in Paul's letters where there is a consensus that he relies on traditions regarding what Jesus taught.<sup>7</sup> One such text is Rom.12.14-21, especially vv.14 and 17. Kim observes that even the minimalists believe there are echoes of Jesus' teaching in this text.<sup>8</sup> The teaching Paul echoes is relevant to this discussion insofar as it is related to attitudes towards those who persecute and hate you:

εὐλογεῖτε τοὺς διώκοντάς [ὑμᾶς] εὐλογεῖτε καὶ μὴ καταρᾶσθε (Rom.12.14; cf.v.17)

This teaching is reported by Lk.6.28a and Matt.5.44. Thus Paul, who rarely engages with JT, on one occasion when he does so, points to a nonviolent approach to those who opposed and hated the followers of Jesus. In Eph.6.10-18 there is a call for nonviolence and resistance to the forces of evil. Similarly, in 1 Peter 2.21-24, tradition is seen that reflects JT teaching on approaches to those who hate you. Although the exhortations about suffering, submission and shepherding in this text are not direct quotes of Synoptic tradition, M.Thompson comments that the 'author employs traditions as a matter of course without needing to identify their origin'.<sup>9</sup> It is unlikely that the author was ignorant of Jesus' teaching in this area, and Thompson offers two suggestions: 1) the author was an eyewitness to Jesus' teaching; 2) if the text is late, it

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for a detailed critique of Brandon see Hengel, (1971); Bammel and Moule eds, (1984); Horsley, (1987) 326 concludes: 'Jesus was apparently a revolutionary, but not a violent political revolutionary'. Desjardins, (1997) in his study of peace and violence in the NT reaches the conclusion that: 'The NT strongly promotes peace and it strongly promotes violence' p.111. However, he sees no evidence that Jesus was a violent revolutionary activist p.117.

<sup>7</sup> See Kim, (1993) 474-492 for a discussion and review of this area of research; he discusses as significant to this discussion Piper, (1979) and M. Thompson, (1991).

<sup>8</sup> Kim, (1993) 477 who is particularly thinking of the work of Walter.

<sup>9</sup> M.Thompson, (1991) 40.

comes from a community who knew the Gospel of Mark and perhaps the Gospel of Luke.<sup>10</sup> Rev.13.10 also reflects the sayings of Jesus *vis-à-vis* nonviolence that those who fight with the sword will die by it. Rev.13.10 corresponds to Matt.26.52 in which Jesus teaches his disciples to live the principle of nonviolence which he has required of them in Matt.5.39-42. According to Luke, Jesus did not preach slaughter and vengeance but forgiveness and reconciliation (4.16-19). Ford commenting on Lk.13.1-9 observes that ‘one must notice that Jesus shows no signs whatsoever of hatred or vengeance when he is told of Pilate’s cruelty to his compatriots’.<sup>11</sup>

Wink argues that Jesus is an exemplar of the Third Way. Third Way, for Wink, is a specific kind of nonviolence, he writes: ‘Human evolution has provided the species with two deeply instinctual responses to violence: flight or fight: Jesus offers a third way: a nonviolent direct action’.<sup>12</sup> Wink discusses four texts that reveal Jesus as such: 1) turn the other cheek (Matt.5.39);<sup>13</sup> 2) give the undergarment (Matt.5.40);<sup>14</sup> 3) go the second mile (Matt.5.41);<sup>15</sup> 4) do not resist evil (Matt.5.39).<sup>16</sup> In the first example, Wink concludes that ‘the person who turns the other cheek is saying, in effect, “Try again”. Your first blow failed to achieve its intended effect’.<sup>17</sup> With the second example, Wink makes the point that the oppressed person is in mind, one who is

---

<sup>10</sup> M.Thompson, (1991) 40; see also Piper, (1979) 62-63.

<sup>11</sup> Ford, (1984) 101.

<sup>12</sup> Wink, (1992) 175; see also (1991) 5-28.

<sup>13</sup> Wink, (1992) 175-177.

<sup>14</sup> Wink, (1992) 177-179.

<sup>15</sup> Wink, (1992) 179-184.

<sup>16</sup> Wink, (1992) 184-186.

<sup>17</sup> Wink, (1992) 176.

‘squeezed dry by the rich’.<sup>18</sup> The background is that the indebtedness of the poor to the rich was so extreme that they might even be stripped of their outer garments. Wink suggests that Jesus has ridiculed the situation and suggests that the poor person strip naked and thus lampoon the oppressor. Possibly such an action would show the madness of a system that leaves a group so impoverished.<sup>19</sup> In the third example of going the second mile, Wink comments that Jesus is not abetting the enemy. This action would throw the soldier off balance by depriving him of the predictability of his victim’s response.<sup>20</sup> In the fourth example Wink observes carefully the Greek:

μη ἀνιστῆναι τῷ πονηρῷ (Matt.5.39)

Wink observes the verb ἀνιστῆναι and its use in other literature and finds some interesting usage of the word. It has the sense of ‘set against’ especially in battle. Josephus uses it for violent struggle 15 out of 17 times. Wink concludes that the phrase means that Jesus is teaching that people should ‘not react violently’.<sup>21</sup>

In a similar tradition to Wink’s analysis of Jesus as a nonviolent resister and martyr is the historical critical work on Mark’s gospel by C. Myers. Important for him is the influence of Isaiah on the writers of the gospel, especially the suffering servant of Deutero-Isaiah as a guiding image. Myers picks up on the importance of nonviolent faithful witness in Mark and Mark’s intertextual developments of the OT, from Isaiah to Jeremiah to Daniel in order to develop his portrayal of Jesus.<sup>22</sup> Myers commenting,

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<sup>18</sup> Wink, (1992) 178.

<sup>19</sup> Wink, (1992) 179.

<sup>20</sup> Wink, (1992) 182. There may be an echo of this in Jas.5.6.

<sup>21</sup> Wink, (1992) 185.

<sup>22</sup> Myers, (1988) 97-99 and on Isaiah 124-127, 173, 302, 309, 363, 378, see also discussion in Dear, (1990) 26-50.



for example, on Mark 10.32-52 observes the importance of the suffering servant theme. The message of 10.45 is ‘the embodiment of the way of nonviolence’.<sup>23</sup> He notes that the idea of a suffering messiah was not exactly what Peter had in mind, yet Myers writes: ‘it is the only Messiah Mark proclaims. The way of nonviolence’.<sup>24</sup> Myers then by way of comparison quotes Gandhi to illustrate the idea of nonviolence as the way of a witness of God: ‘It shall be proved by living it in their lives with utter disregard of the consequences to themselves’.<sup>25</sup> Myers says of Jesus: ‘in the footsteps of “Second Isaiah” he understood the cost of telling the truth and of calling the people to account before the vision; he was prepared to be “despised and rejected, a man of sorrows”’ (Is.53.3).<sup>26</sup>

*Conclusion.* Wink has pioneered the heuristic use of a Gandhian approach to test the hypothesis that a nonviolent revolutionary is a helpful model for understanding Jesus. Myers sees in Mark the intertextual use of the OT, especially of Deutero-Isaiah, to develop the idea of a nonviolent victory similarly to Gandhi’s understanding of how to gain victory. What Wink and Myers have done with the Jesus of the gospels underlies the hope of this thesis *vis-à-vis* the Jesus of Revelation. It is not the task of this thesis to establish the original words and actions of Jesus, yet there is strong evidence for Jesus’ practice and teaching of nonviolence in some traditions by way of developing and critiquing OT ideas, and there is little contrary evidence in other traditions. It is

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<sup>23</sup> Myers, (1988) 279.

<sup>24</sup> Myers, (1988) 279.

<sup>25</sup> Myers, (1988) 279ff. In Gandhi’s complete works 1, 122.

<sup>26</sup> Myers, (1988) 445.

probable that John was familiar with such traditions regarding Jesus, but he was also familiar with traditions relating to Deutero-Isaiah.

## *2. Methodology*

Caird has observed of studies on Revelation: 'in modern times scores of commentaries have been written on it so diverse as to make the reader wonder whether they are discussing the same book'.<sup>27</sup> Such diversity of readings and interpretations is evident among those involved in historical criticism, resulting in an increase in reader-response approaches to Revelation. It will be maintained in this section and throughout this thesis, that the historical-critical approach is still relevant in studying Revelation and will contribute to the aim of this thesis.

Our controlling concerns in understanding Revelation are: (1) understanding the nature of conflict between groups and individuals both within the same community and outside; and (2) that important to a community is the interpretation it gives to its own traditions.

### *Combination of Intertextual and Conflict Theory*

Intertextuality presupposes that an author is a reader and reflector upon tradition. Post-modern use of intertextuality ignores a conflictual model of the social context, because its own model is of a world consisting only of texts in relation to each other. Conflict theories, however, especially in current social scientific use, ignore post-modern understandings of tradition, rather they posit much more a relationship between the socio-economic contexts and texts. Our proposed working methodology

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<sup>27</sup> Caird, (1984) 2.

is to combine these different approaches and observe that what motivates the intertextual process is the development of tradition through conflict between two different interpreters using the same tools and against or in favour of those outside of the same group.

a. *Conflict Theory and Intertextuality*. A distinctive aspect of this thesis is to emphasise the nature of conflict flowing through society, resulting in the re-shaping and developing of ideologies seen in any one group's traditions. John took a hostile stand against the world, Wink writes:

‘The Book of Revelation contemplates a transformation of power relations in which everyone will be able to enjoy the beauty of gold and gems that the rich hoarded for themselves (21.18-21). The revolution begun by Jesus is continued and even extended politically and economically by John’.<sup>28</sup>

John was not new within his tradition. Kristeva comments on the intertextual process: ‘in the space of a given text, several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another’.<sup>29</sup> Postmodernist thinkers claim that texts are open-ended and infinite in their relation with other texts. This is appropriate from the perspective of conflict theories in that the particular social setting engenders for each generation new challenges which feed into the mind and establish new developments for each generation. Greene commenting on intertextuality observes the aspect in which the new work seeks to define itself through the rewriting or modernizing of a past text.

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<sup>28</sup> Wink, (1992) 99.

<sup>29</sup> Kristeva, (1986) 36.

Thus, in this way, the new sets itself as a true successor.<sup>30</sup> Myers makes the important point that intertextuality is rarely straightforward because references are most often implicit. The author assumes the audience is familiar with the tradition and will catch the allusion.<sup>31</sup> This is a particularly important point in that scholars of ancient texts will be often too cautious in seeing the intertextuality in the text and therefore miss the process of interpretation and conflict that underlies the text that is being read. Identical phrases in two or more texts cannot be the only criteria for establishing a relationship between texts.

Malina comments that change is all around us and that although people define their situation through their system of symbols, the system of symbols must be adapted and changed to protect its members within its worldview.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, it is axiomatic to this thesis that John reads and reflects upon this system of symbol as ‘open-ended’ as he turned to the sum of his texts in an environment of conflict to protect and defend his understanding of Jesus’ ideology. In sum, the insight from postmodern and social scientific approaches when combined is that *people respond to their situations in terms of their traditions*.

b. *Cultural-Linguistic Theory*. Lindbeck’s theory, described as ‘cultural-linguistic’, compares well with the approach proposed for this thesis when he talks of religion constituting reality and value systems and giving meaning and shaping the entirety of

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<sup>30</sup> Greene, (1982) 16-19, 37-53.

<sup>31</sup> Myers, (1988) 97.

<sup>32</sup> Malina, (1983) 20-22; Larkin, (1994) 25.

life and thought.<sup>33</sup> In this system, the emphasis is placed on the cultural-linguistic tradition in which meaning is bound to the symbols and descriptions encoded in its sacred texts. Therefore, in the case of a first-century Jew who is interested in the figure of Jesus, the story of Israel needs to be embraced and learned as of course do the traditions about Jesus, to the extent that one's world can be interpreted through such a lens and the traditions also be interpreted.<sup>34</sup> Yet there need not be any one way of so reading and interpreting the text and such reading is dependent on many issues.

Lindbeck's theory of religion has been understood as neglecting the particularity of the author's social setting, and therefore the change and challenge that a group encounters.<sup>35</sup> His thought has especially been associated with the canonical approach which is text-centred.<sup>36</sup> However, Esler while observing the importance of the group's written traditions, so following Lindbeck, also contends that Lindbeck 'paves the way for the integration of the results of historical criticism'.<sup>37</sup> Esler suggests that a group's written tradition or story is not a decontextualized narrative; rather it conveys the existential sense relating or reflecting actual human experience.<sup>38</sup> It would seem better with Lindbeck to argue that the tradition of the Jewish people, in their eyes, is more than a way of conveying existential feeling.<sup>39</sup> Understanding of Jews and early Christians is encoded in their traditions and not in their particular social setting. This

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<sup>33</sup> Lindbeck, (1984) 33.

<sup>34</sup> Lindbeck, (1984) 34.

<sup>35</sup> Meeks, (1986) 180-181.

<sup>36</sup> Frei, (1974); see Childs.

<sup>37</sup> Esler, (1995) 17.

<sup>38</sup> Esler, (1995) 18.

<sup>39</sup> Lindbeck, (1984) rejects the Experiential Expressive model. See discussion in Brett, (1990) 320.

thesis certainly stands closer to Lindbeck insofar as tradition is prioritised over the social setting. However, traditions always make possible more than one response, and texts are infinite in meaning. Therefore, discussion and conflict arise. To this extent this thesis will put more emphasis than Lindbeck does on the element of *responding to situations*. Therefore, the concern here with intertextuality is linked with historical critical considerations in contrast to the canonical approach which sets aside historical critical considerations. In other words, the exegetical interest of this thesis in intertextuality is not in the intertextuality that the present reader sees, but with the intertextuality that John and his readers are likely to have perceived. At the same time, their practice of intertextuality is seen as responding to the needs of the particularity of their situation. John and his readers were well aware of the needs of their community and with the need to make relevant their traditions to those in their tradition who had differing understandings of tradition. A more modern example may convey this. Within the Republican movement in Northern Ireland, who share the same traditions and stories, the traditions and stories may be said to be authoritative and control the way they see their particular setting. However, within the same movement are different ways of seeing their particular situation. The different ways of interpretation can only be accounted for in terms of the need of developing tradition in response to the particular threat that someone sees society presenting. This fits with the *challenge and response theory* in which as Malina writes: ‘persons hassle each other according to socially defined rules to gain honor of another’.<sup>40</sup>

Therefore, it is unnecessary to decontextualize a text. However, this must be left to the discretion of the historian, to the extent that a text must be initially studied as

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<sup>40</sup> Malina, (1981) 29.

reflecting the tradition of its author, but also assessing to what extent it is developed and reflects something of the social context. From the perspective of Revelation, if the first three chapters were dislocated from 4-19, there would be little unambiguous evidence upon which to argue that the text was addressing particular needs. Yet, the seven opening messages locate the whole book as addressing real needs. Bauckham writes that 'John has employed an apparently original method of writing a circular letter which speaks as specifically as could be desired to each particular church'.<sup>41</sup>

Therefore, familiarity with the sacred traditions and the social context is axiomatic for exegetical understanding. Such traditions, viewed from the perspective of Lindbeck's cultural-linguistics, are the communally authoritative rules of discourse, attitude, and action.<sup>42</sup> Such traditions reflect the OT and later Jewish tradition as well as experience and knowledge of the figure of Jesus. The sacred texts of the Jewish religion need close examination. Such consist of the OT and later interpretations of it; yet it is acknowledged with Aune that 'the precursor texts which the ancient reader would have assumed have been lost and are consequently unknown to us';<sup>43</sup> consequently, reconstruction can only be imperfectly realized. Yet, it can be done to the end of having better knowledge of John's sacred traditions. The working maxim of the sociology of knowledge affirms that thought occurs within a social context and thus a line must be drawn from the 'thought' to the 'thinker' to the world of the 'thinker'.<sup>44</sup> For example, when a marginal community's existence is threatened by

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<sup>41</sup> Bauckham, (1993b).

<sup>42</sup> Lindbeck, (1984) 18.

<sup>43</sup> Aune, (1991) 143.

<sup>44</sup> Berger, (1986) 128-137.

persecution or enticement to join the antagonist's community, the community must motivate its members to place itself in extreme marginal situations by depending on its religious traditions.<sup>45</sup> In order to understand the thought, the thinker's situation can only help the interpretation. It is important, therefore, to establish many of the particular issues which challenged synagogue and church members in the late first century when Revelation was written. Both synagogue and church members were closely related and, at the same time, faced in different ways Roman rule. Although 'mighty powers' are not new, and in the mind of a 'revolutionary', all are the same 'stuff', namely 'evil', still, Rome presented its own particular challenges to synagogue and church.

c. *Innerbiblical Approaches*. Another distinctive aspect of this thesis is that Revelation is immersed in Jewish texts, not least the OT, and that Revelation can best be comprehended as reflecting an innerbiblical development. Fishbane uses innerbiblical exegesis to account for the development that occurs within the OT itself.<sup>46</sup> This approach assumes the principle that the OT can be understood as containing re-used, reinterpreted and re-applied material. Fishbane identifies the completed Bible as *traditum* - i.e. the content of the tradition.<sup>47</sup> At the same time, the *traditum* is dependent upon the *traditio* for its ongoing life.<sup>48</sup> The *traditio* is the varied process of

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<sup>45</sup> Berger, (1990) 44.

<sup>46</sup> Fishbane, (1985).

<sup>47</sup> Fishbane, (1985) 6. This is the point that I make that even though the text is open to many readings, the readings must be comprehensible and that disagreement does presuppose understanding.

<sup>48</sup> Fishbane, (1985) 15.



transmission.<sup>49</sup> The innerbiblical method of exegesis is preferred for this thesis insofar as the ancient writers began from the fixed *traditum*. At the same time, the process that leads to the transmission (the *transmissio*) is important. John develops his tradition for particular reasons. To this extent, Fishbane affirms the need to ask the question of the social-historical setting.<sup>50</sup> He points out that knowledge of the social setting ‘contributes to a historical understanding of the living pressures within which competing groups may cite (interpreted) Scripture against each other’.<sup>51</sup> However, Fishbane urges caution regarding the quest for a specific *Sitz im Leben* insofar as he comments that the exegesis within the OT may arise out of inner-scribal processes of textual transmission such as legalistic musings and generalizations.<sup>52</sup>

d. *Revelation as Intertextual Response to the Challenger*. John had a particular understanding of Jesus influenced by the reports about what Jesus taught, his reflection upon his holy traditions and his experiences as a person living in exile isolated on an island. Although there was disagreement regarding who Jesus was and what he taught, the early readers and writers shared the same linguistic system and usage; therefore, meanings of words about Jesus are not determined by the reader’s private intentions, but the reader understands because of a shared heritage. Consequently, the reader did have some shared understanding of the writer’s original intentions. It is clear that John is opposed *in toto* to Rome and conforming with Rome.

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<sup>49</sup> Fishbane, (1985) 6. Fishbane draws his ideas on these terms from Knight, (1975) 5-20.

<sup>50</sup> Fishbane, (1985) 15.

<sup>51</sup> Fishbane, (1985) 15.

<sup>52</sup> Fishbane, (1985) 16.

The crucial sources in his opposition to Rome are Jesus and Jewish traditions. However, members of the churches may not have had the same understandings of Jesus or of tradition, although it is to be expected that at least members would communicate using the same linguistic system, even if to oppose the other. Yet, they all were challenged to make sense of particular issues in the light of their traditions. The challenges to each member depended on how they interpreted their tradition in response to the challenger. If challenged to offer a sacrifice to a Roman deity, the outcome would depend on how the member responded. Clearly, if this were the case most would refuse and there would be the expected pogrom. However, the more difficult scenario is that of the enticing, ruling, power challenging the member by letting them think that they could conform and still be part of their community. This is the greatest threat. Does a member attend a banquet held in honour of the emperor or not? No doubt both synagogue and church members met the challenges in different ways. John's understanding will be examined in the light of his tradition, particular social context and his understanding of Jesus.

*e. Heuristic Model: Revelation in the Light of A Gandhian Ideal.* Although, on the one hand, this thesis is exegetical, on the other hand, the use of heuristic models will aid the exegetical process and facilitate reaching conclusions as to the extent to which Jesus represents, in the christology and ideology of Revelation, the Gandhian ideal. The starting points will be the text and its social background as far as is known from literary and archaeological evidence. Each text will be examined against the first century possibilities that John so intended; the exegesis will be conducted and controlled in dialogue with respective exegetical works. A conclusion will be

established as to what extent Revelation's Jesus represents Gandhi's ideal. However, the claim argued throughout presupposes that there is no exegetical certainty. Recalling Caird's comments that exegetical works on Revelation offer diverse readings, does not argue against exegesis in favour of eisegesis, rather that exegetical conclusions are always provisional in the larger scheme of the exegetical process and each generation evolves the process of the previous generations' labours. This thesis hopes to build upon such labours and contribute an exegetical offering that presents Revelation not as violent or vindictive, but nonviolent in a way to which Gandhi would not object.

### *3. Three Perspectives on Revelation: A, B, C*

This section discusses the ways in which Revelation has been understood *vis-à-vis* violence and vengeance. It will begin by observing perspective A: those who argue that Revelation's Jesus is distant from one who taught and lived 'love and compassion' as seen in the gospels. Perspective B: those who attempt to vindicate the importance of the book while accepting that the book is unlike much of Jesus' teaching on love and compassion. Perspective C: those who seek to emphasise the book as in harmony with Jesus' teaching in the gospels.

This section will show that the diversity of understandings of Revelation suggests that there is a need for an examination regarding Revelation's attitude towards its enemies and how victory is gained.

#### *Perspective A*

D.H. Lawrence attacked Revelation as a reinforcement of envy on the part of the

‘have-nots’;<sup>53</sup> H. Bloom comments that ‘resentment, not love is the teaching of Revelation of St. John the Divine. It is a book without wisdom, goodness, kindness, or affection of any kind’.<sup>54</sup> A.N. Whitehead writes of its ‘barbaric elements’. W.D. Davies comments on Revelation’s ethical position towards the political authorities as ‘an abortive hatred that can only lead, not to their redemption, but to their destruction’.<sup>55</sup> Preisker comments: ‘the Revelation of John manifests a virtuosity of hatred and satisfies itself with the punishment coming to the enemies’.<sup>56</sup> C.J. Jung observes of Jesus in the opening vision of Revelation that he is a figure of fear, not love: ‘This apocalyptic “Christ” behaves rather like a bad-tempered, power conscious “boss”’.<sup>57</sup> Jung sees the ‘outburst of long pent-up feelings such as can frequently be observed in people who strive for perfection’ in the author of Revelation.<sup>58</sup> Wink comments that John abandons ‘Jesus’ teaching on love of enemies and the liberation of women. Hence male domination of women remains intact, and it is not even clear that women will be permitted in the New Jerusalem - so deep is this author’s misogyny’.<sup>59</sup> Selvidge writes: ‘The book of Revelation advocates terrorism and, like the ancient prophets, it justifies the complete annihilation of the other in order to bring into existence a new social order...Revelation advocates the total destruction of a people who are presently

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<sup>53</sup> See discussion of Lawrence in Wainwright, (1993) 199-200.

<sup>54</sup> Bloom quoted by Wainwright, (1993) 113-114; see Bloom, (1988) 1-5.

<sup>55</sup> Quoted by Klassen, (1966) 301.

<sup>56</sup> Quoted by Klassen, (1966) 301.

<sup>57</sup> Jung, (1965) 123.

<sup>58</sup> Quoted in Klassen, (1966) 301.

<sup>59</sup> Wink, (1992) 99; also Garrett, (1992) 377-382; Pippin, (1992) and Selvidge, (1992 and 1996).

in power'.<sup>60</sup> M. Waldmann sees Revelation as an exception to the rest of the NT due to its violence,<sup>61</sup> while R. Völkl comments that hatred is condoned and encouraged in Revelation.<sup>62</sup> W. Barclay was alarmed by Revelation's call to rejoice over fallen Babylon (Rev.18.20) thus regretting that the book does not represent the way that Jesus taught.<sup>63</sup>

### *Perspective B*

Probably the most dominant group.<sup>64</sup> Yarbrow Collins, while understanding Revelation is 'flawed by the darker side of the author's human nature',<sup>65</sup> believes Revelation is a healthy work in which emotions of fear and pity are purged through a process of catharsis.<sup>66</sup> Yarbrow Collins acknowledges on the basis of 13.10 that Revelation 'is an explicit rejection of the militant option'.<sup>67</sup> She argues that resentment against Rome and its power and wealth is evoked and intensified by John, and catharsis is achieved by the repeated presentations of the destruction of the hearers' enemies carried out by God.<sup>68</sup> Yarbrow Collins in some respects follows closely Jung in this understanding of the dark side of human nature and his reading of Revelation. This is in itself not

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<sup>60</sup> Selvidge, (1996) 275.

<sup>61</sup> Quoted in Klassen, (1966) 301.

<sup>62</sup> Quoted in Klassen, (1966) 301.

<sup>63</sup> Barclay, (1976) vol.2 165.

<sup>64</sup> Representatives of this view are many and varied. Charles, (1920) 133, the blood on the garments is the blood of the enemy; Swete, (1922) 252; Ladd, (1978) 254; Mounce, (1977) 344.

<sup>65</sup> Yarbrow Collins, (1984b) 172.

<sup>66</sup> Yarbrow Collins, (1984b) 152.

<sup>67</sup> Yarbrow Collins, (1977) 247.

<sup>68</sup> Yarbrow Collins, (1984b) 154.

sufficient to negate the argument, but it does rely heavily on psychology and the theory of a collective unconscious, and such an understanding of an ancient author must be strongly supported by unambiguous evidence from the text. The NT exegete would do well to be aware of questionable aspects of Jung's work and the theories of psychoanalysis. It seems open to question that John, who knew of Jesus' teaching of love and compassion (see above discussion), in a carefully constructed work to the churches of Asia Minor, would erupt into a state of vengeful anger in describing the end of his enemies. Only the exegesis could allow such a conclusion to be reached.

Schüssler Fiorenza and Yarbrow Collins defend the violence, hatred and vengeance of Revelation with their argument that those who attack the desire for vengeance, as seen, for example, in Rev.6.9-11, only do so insofar as such people do not suffer unbearable oppression and are not driven by the question of justice.<sup>69</sup> Such also is the reading of M. Volf followed by J.L. Coker. Coker notes the importance of pacifism in Volf's reading of Revelation: 'Volf's vision is of a "not yet" eschatology in which Christ will some day return to violently vanquish the forces of evil. Christians can live peaceably in this violent and unjust world because they know that ultimately God's justice and vengeance shall reign'.<sup>70</sup> Coker quoting Volf comments that those who react against a vengeful God must come from 'the quiet of a suburban home'.<sup>71</sup> This line of argument remains unpersuasive as it is impossible to know how much John or

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<sup>69</sup> Yarbrow Collins, (1984b) 170; Schüssler Fiorenza, (1981) 84-85.

<sup>70</sup> Coker, (1999) 266; such a reading resembles Bultmann's reading (1955) vol.2, 175 of Revelation which he reacts to because it is more like a Jewish apocalypse insofar as the present is simply seen 'as a time of temporariness, of waiting'. Missing is the "between-ness" of Christian existence i.e. that Christ has brought believers into a new beginning.

<sup>71</sup> Coker, (1999) 267.

his audience suffered. Perhaps they had courted persecution.<sup>72</sup> It should also be remembered that there are examples of suffering individuals and groups who are imprisoned for their witness for peace and justice and who do not seek vengeance against their captors, for example, Gandhi, Luther King, and the Vietnamese Buddhists who torched themselves as an act of conscience against the government.<sup>73</sup> Although vengeance may well be a legitimate cry of rage against the oppressor, still it is difficult to see how such a theme fits within the teaching of Jesus.<sup>74</sup> It is a dangerous argument to outline one group and describe them as not having experienced a sense of unbearable oppression or the desire for justice.<sup>75</sup> It can be said that there are very few, male or female, or any of the various classes and peoples, that have not experienced humiliation, failure, injustice and depression. Wink writes: 'It is that war draws intelligent, rational, decent people ineluctably into mimetic violence. Before they realize it, they are themselves doing or condoning acts of utter barbarity and feel unable to act otherwise'.<sup>76</sup> Although Revelation, in this perspective, does not call believers to take up arms, it does call them to hope that God will carry out his

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<sup>72</sup> For this view see Thompson, (1990) 191-197 who argues that the work comes from a 'cognitive minority' with its own way of looking at life and the book provides a 'deviant knowledge'.

<sup>73</sup> See accounts of witnesses in the struggle for peace and justice in Dear, (1990).

<sup>74</sup> The parable of the Widow and the Judge (Luke 18.1-8) seems to suggest that the prayers of the oppressed for justice will be vindicated which might be considered prayers of vengeance. However, instead of the message being to persist in prayer, Ford, (1984) 107 proposes that the parable admonishes Jesus' audience not to take vengeance upon themselves but to leave it to God.

<sup>75</sup> It is not easy or obvious to give answers as to who is oppressed. A single mother having to work as a prostitute is clearly oppressed, but so also may be the son of an army general who does not wish to be like his father. There are many nuances in between. Why should we be more tolerant to the mother using violence against her perceived oppressor than the son?

vengeful acts against their perceived oppressors. This is a reading of Jewish apocalypses in general that atheistic humanists (and those in Perspective A) have attacked, insofar as the oppressed are simply encouraged by the hope that God will fight for them. Rowland warns against this perspective: 'All too easily the human ego can demand satisfaction of its needs in the promotion of a good cause with the result that the cause itself can become subordinated to that need'.<sup>77</sup> In the light of this, this argument cannot be said to defend or excuse Revelation of A's attacks.

### *Perspective C*

a. *A.T. Hanson* (1957). Hanson, quoting C.H. Dodd, observes 'wrath' in Romans as 'the effect of human sin...an inevitable process of cause and effect in a moral universe'.<sup>78</sup> Wrath, for Hanson, is a manifestation of rejecting the message of the cross, i.e. love and non-vengeance. It follows that the rejection of this results in the continuing spiral of violence. Dodd's and Hanson's understanding has not gone unchallenged. Within the OT 'wrath' is clearly a personal attribute of God and something of his essence (cf. Ps.85.3). Dunn sees the 'wrath of God' as originating in God and as an activity of God.<sup>79</sup> The 'wrath of the Lamb', however, will be seen to be a more subtle phrase.

b. *G.B. Caird* (1966). Revelation, for Caird, remains close to Romans 12 in its attitude

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<sup>76</sup> Wink, (1992) 201.

<sup>77</sup> Rowland, (1993) 38.

<sup>78</sup> Hanson, (1957) 69.

<sup>79</sup> Dunn, (1988) 55.



towards the empire insofar as violent resistance towards Rome must be avoided.<sup>80</sup> Caird writes of the followers of Christ: 'they must allow themselves to be conquered as their Lord had done'.<sup>81</sup> The destruction that befalls humankind is humankind's own doing, violence leads to violence.<sup>82</sup> In Revelation people are given the opportunity to repent (6.1-8; 8.6-12; 11.13), he writes:

'For unless God is to acknowledge defeat by abandoning his world to the destructive forces of evil, he must provide a way of stopping men from endlessly producing the means of their own destruction and must release them from the tyranny of demonic powers they themselves have brought into being'.<sup>83</sup>

Still, Caird allows that there will be some who will not repent (cf. 20.12): 'For such people [the violent] the presence of God could be nothing but a horror from which they, like the earth they made their home, must flee, leaving not a trace behind. For them there remains only the annihilation'.<sup>84</sup> However, there seems to be some ambivalence in Caird when he comments: 'In justice to John let it be noted that the "lake of fire" is not for men, as it is for the demonic enemies of God, a place of torment'.<sup>85</sup> Caird's position is dominated by his particular nonviolent ideology with its hope for the transformation of evil. In understanding evil, Caird appears to distinguish between Satan and humankind. He emphasises that the nations are deceived by Satan

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<sup>80</sup> Caird, (1984) 170.

<sup>81</sup> Caird, (1984) 169.

<sup>82</sup> Caird, (1984) 295; cf. Schillebeeckx, (1990) 138f.

<sup>83</sup> Caird, (1984) 295-296.

<sup>84</sup> Caird, (1984) 260.

<sup>85</sup> Caird, (1984) 260.

(see Rev.12.12).<sup>86</sup> It is Satan's power that must be destroyed. However, Caird is careful in his discussion: 'it would be a mistake to suppose that, because John speaks of evil in vast cosmic symbols, he therefore believed in mythical demonic powers operating independently of human wrongdoing'.<sup>87</sup> He writes: 'Satan himself owes to human sin his right to appear in heaven and to thwart the merciful purposes of God by his accusations'.<sup>88</sup> Wink's analysis of Rev.12 observes that the Dragon is embodied in one empire after another.<sup>89</sup> Caird like Wink sees the self-destructive nature of evil and, similarly, both see the Dragon as seducing the nations, yet it is not the Dragon that perishes in the self-destructive process. Wink writes: 'Violence can liquidate the current regime, but not the Dragon, who leaps upon its exorcists and possesses them each in turn'.<sup>90</sup> It is logical that only when violence ends will the Dragon be destroyed. There seems to be some tension in Caird's discussion. On the one hand, humankind is to blame, while on the other hand, Satan is the source. However, this tension should not cause problems in terms of comprehending the ancient Jewish and Christian writers. In both cases supernatural forces were understood to be the source of human sin, yet such powers did not excuse the human sin. Similarly, if someone does good, it is thought to be by the Spirit of God, yet it does not mean that the person is not responsible for their own good deed. A parallel might elucidate this discussion. People who attacked Jews in Nazi Germany could be said to be deceived by Nazi propaganda, but few would excuse such attackers, they are held responsible for their actions.

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<sup>86</sup> Caird, (1984) 300.

<sup>87</sup> Caird, (1984) 293.

<sup>88</sup> Caird, (1984) 293.

<sup>89</sup> Wink, (1992) 91.

<sup>90</sup> Wink, (1992) 92.

Caird is in dialogue with Hanson's work on wrath in establishing his own understanding. He quotes Hanson's understanding of wrath as 'the working out in history of the consequences of the rejection and crucifixion of the Messiah'.<sup>91</sup> Contrary to Chilton's reading of Caird, Caird does not accept Hanson's view *vis-à-vis* Rev.6.16.<sup>92</sup> Caird writes: 'there is no need to find a place in John's theology for any concept of "the wrath of the Lamb", since it is not a phrase which he uses *propria persona*, but one which he puts on the lips of the terrified inhabitants of earth'.<sup>93</sup> Although Caird believes Hanson's view is unnecessary *vis-à-vis* Rev.6.16, there is a development by Caird rather than a rejection. In Hanson's view, 'wrath' is intimately connected with the cross. The cross can be the basis of judgement in which judgement depends on whether people say 'no' or 'yes' to the message of the cross. Caird perceives that the message of the cross as the antithesis of that upon which the world is based i.e. violence, is indeed enough to create fear from those who wish to be hidden from the wrath of the Lamb, inasmuch as 'they can see only a figure of inexorable vengeance'.<sup>94</sup> This explains Caird's agreement with Hanson regarding Rev.14.10 that 'wrath of God' is 'the process of nemesis which God allows to work itself out in history...'.<sup>95</sup>

Finally, it is important to notice how Caird achieves a nonviolent reading by what Farrer called 'the rebirth of images' in which OT passages are reworked both

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<sup>91</sup> Caird, (1984) 91.

<sup>92</sup> Chilton, (1987) 198 in his aggressive tone, falsely reads Caird calling his reading absurd.

<sup>93</sup> Caird, (1984) 92.

<sup>94</sup> Caird, (1984) 92-93.

<sup>95</sup> Caird, (1987) [185].

deliberately and unconsciously.<sup>96</sup> A clear example of Caird appropriating this is his exegesis of Rev.5.5: 'What John hears is couched in the traditional messianic imagery of the OT; what he sees constitutes the most impressive rebirth of images he anywhere achieves'.<sup>97</sup>

c. *W. Klassen* (1966). Klassen, from a nonviolent, Mennonite tradition, contributes relevantly in the same year as Caird, but independently, an article on vengeance in Revelation.<sup>98</sup> His particular concern is the fulfilment of the prayer of vengeance in 6.9-11 which he links to John's concern for repentance: 'Throughout the various developments the purpose is always to bring men to repentance through the tragedies of history'.<sup>99</sup> He draws for his support especially on 9.20-21 although these verses point to the understanding that some did not repent. Klassen emphasises that it is the tragedies that are crucial for the bringing about of repentance. Thus, in rejecting God's witnesses, violence escalates, and results in repentance. From the perspective of Girard, the two witnesses (Rev.11), for example, are scapegoats labelled as troublemakers, who, directly, are blamed for the troubles. Yet, their innocence redeems them, and results in increased violence, yet engenders remembrance of the witness' testimony, and the realization of the truth of it. Further, Klassen observes that in 15.4 revenge is not in the minds of the glorified martyrs, they are presented rejoicing that their witness has brought all the nations to God.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Farrer, (1949).

<sup>97</sup> Caird, (1984) 73.

<sup>98</sup> Elsewhere Klassen has argued that the God of the Bible is not vengeful (1984), especially 43-47.

<sup>99</sup> Klassen, (1966) 304.

<sup>100</sup> Klassen, (1966) 306.

In assessing the rejoicing of the saints over the fall of Babylon (18.20), Klassen argues that instead of John presenting a spiteful set of believers gloating over Babylon's suffering, they are, in fact, rejoicing in the outcome of God's cause.<sup>101</sup> Problematic to this is that Babylon is defined as 'violent' and her fall will be violent (18.21). Although the text might suggest that the saints are rejoicing over the violence Babylon is suffering, they are actually celebrating Babylon's fall as the fall of Satan. It is the end of violent nations because people have been transformed to nonviolent principles of love and compassion. Therefore, Satan has nowhere left to dwell. Satan cannot exist unless fed by human violence and greed. It is to be remembered that at this stage in Revelation the majority have repented of their violence (Rev.11.13), Babylon's fall is self-inflicted and empowered by the violence of those who reject the witness of Jesus and his followers. John may be thinking of civil war, violence destroys itself and there is no one to represent Satan. In this sense, Klassen is right to point out that it is the rejoicing in God's cause.

Klassen makes much of the fact that the victory gained is in no way connected with violence.<sup>102</sup> The centre of his understanding of the victory is John's *theologia crucis* in which suffering is that which gains victory.

d. J. Sweet (1979). The Lamb is not 'a lion in sheep's clothing'.<sup>103</sup> Jesus as Lamb is the complete contrast to the second beast (13.11) who uses trickery and violence to make people worship the beast. As Sweet puts it: 'this is indeed a dragon in sheep's

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<sup>101</sup> Klassen, (1966) 304.

<sup>102</sup> Klassen, (1966) 305-306.

<sup>103</sup> Sweet, (1979) 51; see Lawrence, 58ff.

clothing. It is a deliberate parody of the spirit of the Lamb, whose only power is that of the sword which issues from his mouth'.<sup>104</sup> However, Sweet, while emphasising the witness aspect of Jesus as a nonviolent figure, tends towards Jung's analysis when accounting for the negative aspects of Revelation, excusing, similarly to Schüssler Fiorenza and Yarbrow Collins, John's desire for vengeance as due to his personal situation and psychology.<sup>105</sup> This might place Sweet in B. Still, Sweet in much of his exegesis interprets vengeance texts in the light of the Lamb figure. For example, in his exegesis of 6.9-11, Sweet adds much in noting that the vengeance sought by the martyrs under the altar does not result 'in the punishment of individual enemies but in the "judgment of the great harlot" who deceives the nations (17.1-19.2)'.<sup>106</sup> This compares to the discussion of Caird and Wink in which evil is seen through mythical language, and Klassen's view that repentance is the hope of the prayer. In his discussion of Jesus as one who will shepherd the nations with a rod of iron Sweet comments that perhaps the rod of iron is a shepherd's crook to those who respond (cf. 7.17) and an iron bar to those who do not.<sup>107</sup>

Regarding Sweet's understanding of evil, similarities with Caird can be observed. He quotes Caird favourably in acknowledging that evil is not threatening people from outside, it is that which humanity contributes.<sup>108</sup>

Sweet observes that the wrath of the Lamb occurs as a technical term for the recoil

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<sup>104</sup> Sweet, (1979) 51.

<sup>105</sup> Sweet, (1979) 42-44, .50.

<sup>106</sup> Sweet, (1979) 141; cf. Caird's observation (1987) 260 of the 'lake of fire'.

<sup>107</sup> Sweet, (1979) 96.

<sup>108</sup> Sweet, (1979) 168.

of sin upon the sinner, rather than as an emotion in God.<sup>109</sup> In this Sweet reflects the work of Hanson,<sup>110</sup> but he also develops Caird in observing the paradox between ‘wrath’ and ‘Lamb’ in the same way that a paradox exists between ‘Lion’ and ‘Lamb’.<sup>111</sup> Similarly to Caird, Sweet is indebted to Farrer’s understanding of John rebirthing images from the OT to achieve his nonviolent readings.<sup>112</sup>

e. *W. Harrington* (1993, 1995). Harrington argues directly against Yarbrow Collins that any idea of Divine Warrior as representing Jesus’ role for the world is transformed by the dominant suffering Lamb image.<sup>113</sup> The key is that victory has been ‘won by suffering, not by inflicting hurt’.<sup>114</sup> He comments further: ‘He is worthy precisely as the slain Lamb, as the crucified One. Like Paul and Mark, John, too, in his manner, proposes a *theologia crucis*’.<sup>115</sup>

Crucial to Harrington is Rev. 13.10 regarding John’s teaching that those who kill by the sword will die by the sword.<sup>116</sup> Yet, a good many who do not fight by the sword will perish by it. The expectation of a potential martyr is to die by the sword. However, John has in mind the eschaton when violence will self-destruct, and the martyrs will be seen to be redeemed.

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<sup>109</sup> Sweet, (1979) 144.

<sup>110</sup> Sweet, (1979) 144 comments that the impersonal aspect must not be overstressed. God hands sinners over to the effects their refusal to obey God.

<sup>111</sup> Sweet, (1979) 144.

<sup>112</sup> Sweet, (1979) 125-126.

<sup>113</sup> Arguments for this are made in 1993 and 1995.

<sup>114</sup> Harrington, (1995) 59.

<sup>115</sup> Harrington, (1993) 87-88.

<sup>116</sup> Harrington, (1993) 141.

Harrington observes that the violent imagery is mythological and that the battle of Armageddon is not an historical but a mythical battle.<sup>117</sup> However, Harrington affirms also that the mythological language reflects John's observations of the violence of society. He comments of the four riders in 6.1-8 that they suggest 'the mindless folly of war'.<sup>118</sup> The violent depiction of the destruction of the violent, for example, in 19.17-21, shows not the literal eschatological consequences. Harrington quotes Schillebeeckx: 'The evil have excluded themselves from communion with the living God - excluded themselves from life. They no longer exist. But there is no shadow kingdom of hell next to the eternally happy kingdom of God'.<sup>119</sup> Harrington develops his understanding of evil in line with Schillebeeckx. Evil is the lack of good, and 'good', it follows, will be the principle upon which the cosmos is created. Evil is non-existence, it denies all that exists. To this extent it opposes God and therefore has some kind of power. Therefore, to engage in violent conflict with the violent is a contradiction in terms, for to engage in violence is to share and expand the power of evil and to choose to be separated from God, which is destruction.

However, what appears problematic for Harrington's view regarding evil as violence that self-destructs, is that John maintains that God is in control of what is happening (also a view associated with Caird and Sweet). In Rev.16.2,3,4,8,10,12,17 it is the angels who pour out the plagues on the earth. It is not, however, surprising that John so presents the causes of violence. Similarly, the author of 2 Baruch 7 in describing the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem sets God as the one who has

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<sup>117</sup> Harrington, (1993) 229.

<sup>118</sup> Harrington, (1993) 92.

<sup>119</sup> Harrington, (1993) 234.



caused it and not the Chaldeans. Yet it is the Chaldeans who destroy Jerusalem. This expresses a theological tradition presenting God as in control, the source and truth of the cosmos based on love, compassion and nonviolence. Therefore, violence will not survive as it is opposed to the essence of God's creation. For these ancient authors the destruction of the violent is God's doing expressing God mythologically as a mighty warrior (see Rev.11.17). Yet, such traditions, demythologised, do not contradict the idea that violence would self-destruct as violence contravenes the principles upon which the world was created, yet for the ancient, the agent of death and destruction was God as he is the creator of the goodness which brings about the end of violence.

Relating also to the discussion with Caird above, the presentation that evil has an ontological status in Revelation and throughout the OT needs further examination. In 9.1-12 John depicts in mythological language the origin of evil. It arises from the abyss (v.1) the source of chaos and the destined place of evil spirits (Luke 8.31). It is the place from which the beast ascends (11.7; 17.8). Caird suggested the abyss represented 'the cumulative power and virulence of evil to which all men contribute, and by which all men, whether they choose or not, are affected'.<sup>120</sup> Caird therefore points towards the use of mythological language expressing a perception of human evil. Harrington observes the human propensity to look to an influence beyond ourselves for the evil in our world.<sup>121</sup> Caird observes that although John speaks of evil in vast cosmic terms, he does not believe that John intends that Satan works independently of humanity.<sup>122</sup> Harrington observes Gen.8.21: 'The imagination of

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<sup>120</sup> Caird, (1984) 119; Sweet, (1979) 168.

<sup>121</sup> Harrington, (1993) 111.

<sup>122</sup> Caird, (1984) 293.

man's heart is evil from his youth'. Harrington comments that 'evil is within humanness, not outside of it. For evil is not only the absence of good; it is, more precisely, the absence of everything human'.<sup>123</sup> In this way Harrington demythologizes Satan: 'Satan is a powerful symbol, representing the whole gamut of evil and its infectious presence in the human race'.<sup>124</sup> The destruction of Satan is the destruction of inhumanity.

Harrington contributes significantly to exegesis in developing the importance of Farrer's idea of the rebirth of OT imagery in Revelation, in particular, the reversal of a violent messianic expectation.<sup>125</sup> In his discussion of the rider in 19.11-17, he comments that instead of the rider being the violent, crushing warrior of Isaiah 63, 'might not John, in a startling rebirth of images, be challenging his hearer/readers to reinterpret the imagery to which he and they are heirs? John has reversed the image of Isaiah'.<sup>126</sup> This observation links with the discussion on methodology *vis-à-vis* innerbiblical approaches, as well as the postmodernist point regarding the importance of intertextuality. The reader shares in the development of tradition, in a situation of crisis and conflict within a community in response to the challenges of the world, which is a dominating aspect of this thesis in the exegetical process.

Finally, Harrington looks at 'wrath' and reflects the view of the above scholars of (C). The 'wrath of the Lamb' 'is written on the Cross'.<sup>127</sup> He quotes favourably C.H. Dodd's understanding of 'wrath' in Paul's Romans and the author of Heb.10.31

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<sup>123</sup> Harrington, (1993) 111.

<sup>124</sup> Harrington, (1993) 111.

<sup>125</sup> There are great similarities at this point with Bauckham.

<sup>126</sup> Harrington, (1993) 192.

<sup>127</sup> Harrington, (1993) 97.

observing that the really awful thing is to fall out of God's hands, and to be left to oneself in a world where the choice of evil brings its own moral retribution.<sup>128</sup>

f. R. Bauckham (1993-4). Distinctive to his study that places him in this group is Bauckham's proposal that Revelation is a Christian war scroll appropriated for Christian witness and martyrdom.<sup>129</sup> In this way his work is not unlike Yarbrow Collins' study of martyrdom in holy war tradition insofar as victory is still the hope in a messianic war, but instead of God gaining a military victory, it would be gained by martyrdom.<sup>130</sup> However, he does not appropriate the model of catharsis to excuse the conquering/vengeance aspect of Revelation. Rather, he sees the warfare metaphor to be re-interpreted in the light of the suffering witness theme; so, martyrdom is not one that brings about vengeance as in Yarbrow Collins' view (cf. *T.Mos.*10), but brings about salvation. He observes, for example, that John reinterprets the military conquering Lion with a slain Lamb.<sup>131</sup> This connects with the innerbiblical exegesis which it is expected John appropriated. Bauckham, therefore, points out that John draws upon OT motifs other than that of holy war; for example, he thinks it quite plausible that John recalls the lamb led to the slaughter in Is.53.7.<sup>132</sup>

Bauckham's work reflects independently Barbé's *theology of conflict* with its nonviolent reading of the Bible as well as Wink's understanding of Israel's

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<sup>128</sup> Harrington, (1993) 161.

<sup>129</sup> Bauckham, (1993a) 213; bears similarities with Harrington but he does not reflect so much the similarity with the war scroll.

<sup>130</sup> Yarbrow Collins, (1977) 243, 248-252.

<sup>131</sup> Bauckham, (1993a) 214; this is also emphasised by Caird, (1984) 73 and Sweet, (1979) 125.

<sup>132</sup> Bauckham, (1993a) 215.

development from submission to holy war to prophetic peacemaking.<sup>133</sup> The essence of messianic holy war tradition is that the righteous will conquer by violence (cf. especially 1QM14). Barbé observes that this tradition exists in all societies and in the OT. However, he observes developments from this in the OT similarly to Wink. Barbé contrasts, for example, the story of Cain and Abel (Gen.4.1-25) with that of the Roman myth of Romulus. Romulus slaughters his brother Remus as Cain slaughters Abel. Romulus, unlike Cain, is justified and exalted, resulting in the founding of Rome.<sup>134</sup> Cain, however, is presented as a murderer, who is preserved from the cycle of violence.<sup>135</sup> Moreover, Barbé sees elements in Is.53 as ‘reinforcing the evolution we perceive in the Bible toward a new way of making peace’.<sup>136</sup> The Lamb is not the good looking, powerful, strong hero but represents ‘suffering’. Barbé writes: ‘By the suffering of the righteous victim, the community becomes conscious of the evil it harbors in its bosom’.<sup>137</sup> Bauckham’s reading suggests that Revelation is representative and a high point of Barbé’s evolution and re-conscientization of the mechanisms of conflict with a new nonviolent conception of God: ‘Jesus has already defeated evil by sacrificial death. He has delivered God’s people, but they are from all

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<sup>133</sup> Wink, (1992) 188.

<sup>134</sup> Barbé, (1989) 25.

<sup>135</sup> Barbé, (1989) 27. Bauckham also discusses the significance of the Cain and Abel story *vis-à-vis* violence (1989) 134: ‘The development of human civilization is described in Genesis 4 in such a way as to highlight the theme of violence. Though the origins of civilization in Cain’s city and the inventions of the sons of Lamech (4.17, 20-22) are not condemned, they are framed by a context of escalating violence’

<sup>136</sup> Barbé, (1989) 46; cf. Wink’s understanding from submission to prophetic peacemaking.

<sup>137</sup> Barbé, (1989) 46.

nations, not only Jews'.<sup>138</sup> Bauckham sees Jesus as providing a model of active resistance for his followers: 'Christians are called to participate in his war and his victory - but by the same means as he employed: bearing the witness of Jesus to the point of martyrdom. It is misleading to describe this as "passive resistance": for John it is as active as any physical warfare and his use of holy war imagery conveys this need for active engagement in the Lamb's war'.<sup>139</sup> Gandhi, too, saw the battle against oppression as a war. Wink observes this point *vis-à-vis* Gandhi: 'Gandhi insisted that no one join him who was not willing to take up arms to fight for independence'. Bauckham's and Harrington's discussions develop Jesus as the Third Way more than the previous thinkers. As Wink points out, 'one cannot pass directly from the "flight" to Jesus' Third Way. One needs to pass through the "fight" stage'.<sup>140</sup>

Finally, it is apparent from the above that Bauckham, like Caird and Sweet, is indebted to Farrer for the concept of the rebirth of images.<sup>141</sup>

g. *J.N. Kraybill* (1996). Again Revelation proves attractive to a Mennonite writer in his monograph on the imperial cult and commerce in Revelation. Kraybill sets out to develop, as he himself says, Bauckham's understanding of Rev.18, providing a study of Revelation as a critique of the economic policies which led to hardship and violence in the Roman period. In the main, his work is concerned with cultic aspects of imperial rule. Of particular importance to this study is his assessment of Revelation's

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<sup>138</sup> Bauckham, (1993a) 215.

<sup>139</sup> Bauckham, (1993a) 234.

<sup>140</sup> Wink, (1992) 187.

<sup>141</sup> Bauckham, (1993a) 178.

condemnation of Roman violence and economic exploitation.

Kraybill discusses broader themes regarding Revelation and violence. Jesus is a nonviolent figure on the basis of the gospels. Although he does not engage in the more complex exegesis of Revelation in the light of this, still he understands resistance in Revelation as nonviolent and active.<sup>142</sup> What he means by active is presumably the testimony that followers of Jesus give, although he nowhere refers to ‘witness’ or ‘testimony’. It would seem that the witness would be seen, in ways similar to that of Gandhi, in noncooperation and readiness to suffer and be martyred. For example, supporting Tertullian’s reading of Rev.18.4, Kraybill writes: ‘John was adamant that disciples of Jesus Christ must withdraw from exchange with Rome on every level, including trade’.<sup>143</sup> Kraybill acknowledges that noncooperation would lead the witness into an economically difficult situation.<sup>144</sup> Noncooperation was therefore difficult, and further was hindered by the fact that many were well off. He observes that the threat to the Christian communities of Asia Minor was the internal desire to conform rather than ‘external pressure in the way of persecution’.<sup>145</sup>

Like the above thinkers, Kraybill’s understanding of victory remains rooted in a *theologia crucis*. He points out that Revelation ‘parts dramatically from the Jewish tradition of heroic armed revolt against imperial oppression’. Rather, ‘in Revelation it is a Lamb “standing as if it had been slaughtered” (5.6) that leads God’s people to triumphant celebration on Mount Zion’.<sup>146</sup> Picking up on 13.10, he comments that the

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<sup>142</sup> Kraybill, (1996) 202.

<sup>143</sup> kraybill, (1996) 29.

<sup>144</sup> Kraybill, (1996) 30.

<sup>145</sup> Kraybill, 91996) 197.

<sup>146</sup> Kraybill, (1996) 201.

saints must endure with patience and nonviolence. Kraybill observes that John structures his work on the two polarities of 'beast' = greed and idolatry resulting in non-existence in the lake of fire, and 'Lamb' = hope and love resulting in the New Jerusalem.<sup>147</sup> The beast is represented not just in the imperial cult, but in the violence and oppression that proceed from its rule and which 'violated Christian standards of love and justice'.<sup>148</sup> Such love and justice run through Revelation and this is reflected in its soteriology. Kraybill observes that Revelation 'never suggests that people who co-operated with idolatrous pagan institutions are beyond redemption'.<sup>149</sup> Kraybill comments that 'people who love greed and violence more than the kingdom of God will have excluded themselves'.<sup>150</sup>

In spite of Kraybill's focus on the love and hope in Revelation, he, at points, reflects more the work of Yarbrow Collins when observing the joy at the fall of Babylon and the 'bile of the book'.<sup>151</sup> He comments in the same interpretative way as Yarbrow Collins: 'The bile of the book pours out as a catharsis of emotion, offered to God as the only one capable of redressing the situation'.<sup>152</sup> This cannot (as has been argued in more detail in the discussion of perspective B) be excused in terms of the Christian values of love and compassion. Kraybill's work does not engage with Klassen's work and it is difficult to know whether Kraybill would modify his discussion here and view the joy at God's rule being established by the self-destructive aspect of violence.

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<sup>147</sup> Kraybill, (1996) 202.

<sup>148</sup> Kraybill, (1996) 200.

<sup>149</sup> Kraybill, (1996) 203.

<sup>150</sup> Kraybill, (1996) 203.

<sup>151</sup> Kraybill, (1996) 205.

<sup>152</sup> Kraybill, (1996) 205; strangely he does not acknowledge Yarbrow Collins.

Kraybill's reading of the four horses in 6.1-8 certainly suggests that Kraybill acknowledges the self-destructive nature of violence when he observes that 'they are evil agents of Roman oppression' and that the red horse is the horse of 'civil war'.<sup>153</sup>

#### *Concluding discussion relating to Perspectives on Revelation*

It is clear that A presents a broad readership who dismiss the positive value of Revelation and are predisposed to see the text as different to the Jesus of the gospels. This perspective has a preconceived idea that apocalyptic literature offers an easy answer to those who are the most powerless of society, through the hope of divine intervention, and thus results in such people not taking responsibility for their condition. It is a tradition that simply wishes destruction on a world that they cannot attain. Bultmann, although not discussed in the above, represents such an understanding when he sees Revelation in the light of his preconception of Jewish apocalypses in which the present is viewed as a time of waiting before the day of wrath.<sup>154</sup> This group shows no evidence of understanding the imagery of Revelation as transformed traditional imagery. Perspective B presents the largest interpretative approach to Revelation with the majority of commentaries allowing for the violence of the Book. It is characterized by a need to justify the more violent aspects of Revelation in favour of redemptive violence.<sup>155</sup> Revelation's presentation of Jesus would be considered a strong move away from the Jesus of the gospels as one who taught nonviolence. Yet, still this group understands believers to be nonviolent, and like

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<sup>153</sup> Kraybill, (1996) 147.

<sup>154</sup> Bultmann, (1955) 175.

<sup>155</sup> A phrase that Wink uses (1992) 17-31.



perspective A, sees in Revelation the hope that God in Jesus will deal violently with the oppressors. Similarly to A, B plays down any aspect of a 'between-ness' eschatology in which believers are the first fruits of the new age, witnesses in transforming the violence. B resembles closely A, except that B sees value in the violence of the text, whereas A dismisses as horrific B's understanding of Revelation. Witness in B is simply to be ready to suffer so that God will punish the inflicter of suffering. Its nonviolence is a strategy to bring God's vengeance, and not intrinsic to God's nature. C is distinguished by its emphasis on Revelation as controlled by the slain Lamb in which the war metaphor is rebirthed in the light of suffering faithful witness themes. C views apocalyptic literature, generally, as offering another way of perceiving the world, urging people to be active in resisting the dominant power, but in such a way that seeks the transformation of the enemy rather than by waiting for God to destroy them. Nonviolence is the essence of Revelation's understanding of God and his creation and not a strategy to be adopted by the powerless.

#### *4. The Particular Perspective of this Thesis*

In terms of this thesis, the development of C is of concern, especially through its correspondence with Gandhian ideology. Distinctive to this thesis is the development of martyr and witness themes influenced by a Jewish background in opposition to Graeco-Roman *ideals*; the witness theme of Deutero-Isaiah culminating in Is.53 will be looked at against the background of Jewish literature, drawing upon the work especially of Nickelsburg. Central to this development will be the rhetorical situation of *challenge and response* <sup>156</sup> to fellow Jews in the area. Social-scientific approaches

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<sup>156</sup> *Challenge and Response games* will be looked at in more detail on chapter 2.

will emerge organically throughout the thesis. This *challenge and response game* has its origins in the *genius* of Jesus, but also in response to the particularity of Domitian's reign and the consequences of his reign in Asia Minor.

## 5. *Nonviolence*

Mohandas Gandhi (1869-1948), more than any thinker and person this century, encapsulates, in his writings and life, within both the context of the ashram in South Africa and India, and in his struggle with their respective ruling powers, the ideology of nonviolence. This discussion on nonviolence will be particularly concerned with Gandhi. While not claiming to be an exhaustive work on Gandhi, its aim is to establish Gandhi's distinctive understanding in order to delineate the nonviolent ideology which will be appropriated heuristically as a model for understanding Revelation by comparison. Discussion will draw comparisons with NT writings to illustrate the similarities.

Gandhi's thought is not passive or submissive but active. Gandhi desired total victory for his understanding of truth. His way is the Third Way achieved through nonviolence, suffering, witness and non-compromise. The following diagram expresses this:



As the diagram suggests, the means by which victory is gained are inter-connected. Nonviolence is the witness that an activist gives, but nonviolence will result in refusing to compromise with a system that advocates violence. Ultimately, such principles will result in suffering which is again the witness that is given.

a. *Ahimsa*. By this term Gandhi expresses the idea of noninjury, nonviolence, nonviolent love and suffering love.<sup>157</sup> *Himsa* is contrary to truth and God. It is that which is opposed to life, that which espouses the principle of meeting force with force

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<sup>157</sup> Jesudasan, (1984) 95-96, 159; Gandhi writes: 'No man has ever been able to describe God fully.

The same is true of *ahimsa*' (11—45).

and hatred with hatred. Merton comments that '*himsa* increases man's progressive degeneration'.<sup>158</sup> Jesudasan observes that for Gandhi 'the root of the evil of violence was the want of a living faith in a living God' thus implying that evil exists only in terms of the absence of God.<sup>159</sup> In 1 John the polarity between violence and nonviolence is present in the figure of Cain and Abel. The author expresses the theology that Cain is from the evil one (3.12) thus suggesting the idea that it is the force of evil that results in the violence. It is suggested, here, that *himsa* is not so much the opposite of *ahimsa* but that which is devoid of *ahimsa* as *ahimsa* is the fundamental law of our being expressing the truth of humankind's nature which desires peace, justice, order, freedom and personal dignity. To be alienated from this is to be devoid of the basis of existence.

Merton adds that *ahimsa*, in Gandhi, is not a policy, but a way of transforming relationships so as to bring about a peaceful transfer of power, i.e. victory.<sup>160</sup> This is not surprising in view of Gandhi's understanding of *ahimsa* as synonymous with truth (*satya*).<sup>161</sup> In Gandhi's ideology there is underlying the cosmos a 'truth'. As has been seen, for Gandhi, God is truth. Gandhi wrote that the nearest approach to *satya* is through 'love'.<sup>162</sup> Since it can be argued that the innocent suffer at the hands of the violent, and that it can be said that those who do not fight by the sword will also suffer; it is a legitimate argument to suggest that 'violence' is the better way for a

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<sup>158</sup> Merton, (1996) 69.

<sup>159</sup> Jesudasan, (1984) 114.

<sup>160</sup> Merton, (1996) 69-70.

<sup>161</sup> Quoted in Jesudasan, (1984) 95. Later in Gandhi's life he used *satya* instead of God (see Parekh, (1997) 26; Hick, (1999) 191 discusses Gandhi's understanding of truth as God.

<sup>162</sup> Quoted in Jesudasan, (1984) 94.

human being. However, it is the idea of *satya* that makes such an argument untenable and erroneous in Gandhi's thought. Fundamental to *satya* are love and nonviolence. These principles are those which bring humanity to God, to fail to pursue this way is to be estranged from the source of humanity's being and never to know absolute truth which is God. Sharp observes that *satya* 'connotes the essence of being'. To hold fast (*agraha*) to *satya* is to live in 'harmony with the nature of existence and reality'.<sup>163</sup> Therefore Gandhi could write:<sup>164</sup>

'Belief in nonviolence is based on the assumption that human nature in its essence is one and therefore unfailingly responds to the advances of love' (1—175)

Merton observes that in Gandhi's thought the idea of facing death and suffering without retaliation is impossible without a belief in God.<sup>165</sup> This connects with the fundamental principle that truth/non-violence/love are synonymous with God in Gandhi's thought:

'I claim to be a passionate seeker after truth, which is but another name for God. In the course of that search the discovery of non-violence came to me' (1—282)

Similarly, the writer of 1 John observes that ἀγάπη is possible only when God is central to a person's life insofar as ὁ θεὸς ἀγάπη ἐστίν (1 Jn 4.8). It is in 1 John 3.11-18 that similarities between Gandhi and the Christian tradition appear most unambiguously *vis-à-vis* ἀγάπη and *ahimsa*.<sup>166</sup> The ultimate command is to love one another (v.11). Evil is personified in the first murder committed by Cain with Abel as

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<sup>163</sup> Sharp, (1979) 288; Hick, (1999) 191-199.

<sup>164</sup> All quotes of Gandhi, unless otherwise stated, come from Gandhi's two-volume edition of *Nonviolence in Peace and War* (1948).

<sup>165</sup> Merton, (1996) 109.

<sup>166</sup> This is observed most clearly in the work of Bondurant, (1965) 24; also Jesudasan, (1984) 95-96.

the victim, who was righteous before God (v.12). Not to have ἀγάπη is to remain in death (v.14). Even to hate is to murder (v.15). In v.16 the high point of ἀγάπη is to die for another:

ἐν τούτῳ ἐγνώκαμεν τὴν ἀγάπην, ὅτι ἐκεῖνος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ ἔθηκεν

In the second clause of this verse the essence of ἀγάπη is made clear, that Jesus laid down his life for humanity. In the same verse is a condition of all who have ἀγάπη to do the same. The idea of *ahimsa* being a component of readiness to die for others is seen in Gandhi's thought in the idea of *tapasya*.

b. *Tapasya*. This term represents penance, mortification, expiation and self-suffering.<sup>167</sup> Crucial to Gandhi's *ahimsa* is the idea of suffering without retaliation (1—272) while believing that such an action will bring about the transformation of those committed to *himsa*:

‘Those who die unresistingly are likely to still the fury of violence by their wholly innocent sacrifice’ (1—278)

Jesudasan comments that in Gandhi's thought ‘submission to pain is the very nature of love that is *ahimsa*’.<sup>168</sup> Gandhi almost utters John's test of one who has ἀγάπη (4.16):

‘The test of love is *tapasya* and *tapasya* means self-suffering’<sup>169</sup>

It follows that martyrdom is an important component of being a *satyagrahi* for Gandhi. Ellacuría writes that being a nonviolent supporter:

‘does not mean that they [supporters of nonviolence] leave the “dirty” work to others, counting themselves among the “pure” who do not get their hands

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<sup>167</sup>Jesudasan, (1984) 96-97, 161.

<sup>168</sup> Jesudasan, (1984) 96.

<sup>169</sup> Quoted in Jesudasan, (1984) 96.

dirty. It is rather a question of giving the fullest and most comprehensive witness to the fact that life is above death, and that love is stronger than hate'.<sup>170</sup>

Here is seen the idea of martyrdom being a witness as in Gandhi's work. Barbé writes that 'death of the righteous one has a curious power. It moves the noblest fibres of the human heart'.<sup>171</sup> Barbé is not attempting to explain the way it influences people, but that evidence shows that a martyr's death can have a profound influence. However, he does point out that the death of a martyr needs to be remembered and proclaimed as one who died as an innocent person.<sup>172</sup> This suggests that a martyr of nonviolence depends on the followers to be ready to die themselves. A powerful example of being ready to die for a belief is the self-immolation of the seven Vietnamese Buddhist martyrs in 1963. They are considered by their people as martyrs because they set fire to themselves as a protest against the government's banning of Buddhist worship. Hope and Young write that their actions welded a fierce unity in the populace.<sup>173</sup> The Vietnamese Zen monk, Thich Nhat Hanh comments on his friends' action as 'not suicide. It was sacrifice. Suicide is the resignation of hope in life. The immolations were affirmations of hope, and an effort to save life'.<sup>174</sup> Their actions had a visible

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<sup>170</sup> Ellacuría, (1988) 77.

<sup>171</sup> Barbé, (1989) 59; see also Sobrino, (1990) 127 in which he discusses the salvation that martyrs bring.

<sup>172</sup> Barbé, (1989) 59. See my discussion on sociology of martyrdom.

<sup>173</sup> Hope & Young, (1977) 189.

<sup>174</sup> Hope & Young, (1977) 190 quotes the words of Thich Nhat Hanh in his words to Luther King; see Wink, (1992) 192-193 who considers both Gandhi and Thich Nhat Hanh as exemplars of the third way.

effect upon their own people. Sobrino writes: 'the fact that hope arises and re-arises in history shows that history has a current of hope running through it which is available to all. The bearers of this current of hope are the crucified peoples'.<sup>175</sup> Martyrdom was perceived as a way of transforming their oppressor. Parekh observes, in Gandhi's thought, the theme of suffering love moving the heart as the best way to transform the one committed to *himsa*. He quotes Gandhi:

'I have come to this fundamental conclusion that if you want something really important to be done, you must not merely satisfy the reason, you must move the heart also. The appeal of reason is more to the head, but the penetration of the heart comes from suffering. It opens up the inner understanding in man. Suffering is the badge of the human race not the sword' (xlviii. 189)<sup>176</sup>

It is the essence of nonviolence to refuse to hurt another. It follows therefore that martyrdom is the essence of nonviolence. Parekh observes the dynamics of this process. The *satyagrahi*, when labelled by the opponent as a 'troublemaker', refuses not only to co-operate with him, but also to reciprocate the enemy's hatred for the *satyagrahi*. Instead, a *satyagrahi* should see the oppressor as a fellow human in need of being restored to God.<sup>177</sup> In suffering love, 'the *satyagrahi*'s love and moral nobility disarmed his opponent, weakened his feelings of anger, and mobilized his higher nature. And his uncomplaining *suffering* denied his opponent the pleasure of victory, mobilized neutral public opinion'.<sup>178</sup> In this action the *satyagrahi* is a witness to *ahimsa* in order to facilitate the violent towards love. Sobrino speaks of martyrdom as

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<sup>175</sup> Sobrino, (1990) 127.

<sup>176</sup> In Parekh, (1997) 55.

<sup>177</sup> Parekh, (1997) 55.

<sup>178</sup> Parekh, (1997) 56; this compares well with Wink's discussion of the four points (see above).



offering 'love' which is also the gift of 'humanization'.<sup>179</sup> This is connected with Gandhi's understanding of atonement.

Atonement, for Gandhi, is not the removal of sin. Jesudasan observes that the task of the nonviolent activist is to remove the ignorance of the one committed to violence and in so doing facilitate the transformation of the individual to be at-one-ment.<sup>180</sup> In this way the act of dying at the hand of the violent would be seen as an act on behalf of the violent person by showing that the martyr's love will have an impact on the oppressor. Therefore, a suffering servant is a witness to the one who lives by violence. Moreover, it is an act for those committed to nonviolence insofar as it strengthens social grouping (see discussion in chapter 2).

However, when the ignorance is removed and the oppressor continues and even intensifies the action of violence, such will receive no atonement:

'*Prayaschchitta* [penance] wins forgiveness only for one who has told a lie in ignorance'.<sup>181</sup>

In this way Gandhi understands that there are those who will continue in their violence even when they experience and begin to know *satya*, when they have felt and seen the spiral of violence interrupted and know the person is innocent. It is suggested that, for Gandhi, the outcome of such a person and such an ideology is that the violent themselves will die by violence:

'My faith in the saying that what is gained by the sword will also be lost by the sword is imperishable' (1—212)<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> Sobrino, (1990) 127.

<sup>180</sup> Jesudasan, (1984) 110.

<sup>181</sup> Quoted in Jesudasan, (1984) 110.

<sup>182</sup> In II—59 Gandhi speaks of the sword of the *satyagrahi* as being love.

Also he writes:

‘It is a bad outlook for the world if the spirit of violence takes hold of the mass mind.  
Ultimately it destroys the race (II—75)

It follows that Gandhi saw the outcome for those living by violence as grisly, due to its state as alienated from God. Such is the lot that is so often graphically described in Jewish and Christian early writings. Schillebeeckx emphasizes that ‘God does not take vengeance; he leaves evil to its own, limited logic!’.<sup>183</sup> Therefore, in terms of the violence a person commits, the violence itself is the punishment, insofar as the person committed to *himsa* lives apart from the controlling principle of life, i.e. God.<sup>184</sup> This in itself should engender a sense of compassion as the outcome of a life separated from *ahimsa* is non-existence.<sup>185</sup>

c. *Identification with sin.* Gandhi taught that *satyagrahis* ideally never think of themselves as beyond sin:

‘sin of one is the sin of all. And hence it is not up to us to destroy the evil doer. We should, on the contrary, suffer for him’.<sup>186</sup>

If they are committed to *ahimsa* they will experience the rule of *himsa* and therefore suffer its consequences. The alternative is ‘redemptive violence’ in which the sin and violence in individuals and groups are projected on to some ‘other’, i.e. the enemy and

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<sup>183</sup> Schillebeeckx, (1990) 138f cf. Harrington, (1993), 234 who observes Schillebeeckx.

<sup>184</sup> Wink, (1992) 69 speaks of the evil that can be transformed. It is the ‘brute lust for annihilation. It is the sedimentation of thousands of years of human choices for evil’.

<sup>185</sup> Hick, (1974) 355 makes this point that human sufferings are self-regarding, but Jesus’ suffering was for humanity.

<sup>186</sup> Quoted in Jesudasan, (1984) 109.

that enemy is then destroyed either by God (so understood in certain apocalyptic traditions) or by the those who have projected their sin on to their enemy. The Jews during the second European war are an example of scapegoats who were cast as the cause of all Germany's problems and who then must be destroyed before the life of the Germans could be improved. Barbé, commenting on Girard's work on nonviolence, makes the point that although the so called enemy has been removed and peace may reign for a time, the violence itself has not been removed and so the community has deceived itself.<sup>187</sup> It follows that the spiral of violence continues. However, in the Gandhian tradition, *ahimsa* conquers not by eradicating or scapegoating, but by dying at the hands of *himsa*.

Wink observes the importance of the doctrine of the fall in which all are perceived as sharing the same sin. The fact that we exist in a society socialized in the principle of *himsa* makes all share in its existence. Wink comments that because we are socialized into this world of *himsa*, we do not even recognise it as malignancy. Redemption is a slow process of awakening, while never recognising fully what *himsa* is.<sup>188</sup> To this extent Gandhi avoided the idea of having an enemy or indeed a duality in thought:

'In the dictionary of *satyagraha* there is no enemy' (1—216)

d. *Nonviolent Revolution*. Kumar observes that the world we live in is ruled on the principle of *himsa* (violence). He claims that it follows that there can be no just or redemptive violence, since the idea of a violent revolution is a contradiction in terms

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<sup>187</sup> Barbé, (1989) 12.

<sup>188</sup> Wink, (1992) 68-73.

insofar as revolution implies overall change.<sup>189</sup> What is the change if the revolution is violent? There is no change. Simply, the rule of *himsa* is transferred from oppressor to victim who now becomes the inflictor of *himsa*. As Caird writes: 'Evil wins its success by contagion. Whenever a man responds to an injury with retaliation, or imitation, sin has gained control of two lives in the place of one'.<sup>190</sup> In Jewish and Christian terms, the rule of Satan is transferred from one supnation to another (cf. Rev. 18). For example, there is no distinction between Babylon and Rome, they are essentially the same, simply representatives of *himsa*. However, 'true revolution' is a change from the old rule of violence to that of nonviolence which are the total opposites - the rule of God or Satan.<sup>191</sup> This involves a transformation rather than seeing a need for eradication:

'A non-violent revolution is not a programme of seizure of power. It is a programme of transformation of relationships' (II—8)

Evil is not something to hate, to hate is to become evil. Gandhi wrote:

'*Satyagraha* believes not in destruction but conversion' (II—149)

*Ahimsa*, *tapasya* and *satya* are components of *satyagraha*. In many ways the *satyagraha* could be offered as the Gandhian term for revolution as it expresses the idea of holding onto truth; suffering for justice; soul or true force. It is a force that seeks change. Therefore, a *satyagrahi* is one who seeks to win over opponents and not to destroy them on the principle that that which they 'live by' is itself destroying them. To this extent a *satyagrahi* is a nonviolent revolutionary.

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<sup>189</sup> Kumar, (1969).

<sup>190</sup> Caird, (1955) 2 and also (1987) 170 in commenting on Rev.13.10.

<sup>191</sup> Kumar, (1969) 10-25.

Jesudasan observes several stages by which a *satyagrahi* would seek to persuade an opponent:<sup>192</sup> 1) Persuasion through reasoning which would appeal to the idea expressed in *satya*. 2) Emotional persuasion through suffering in order to show that the sufferer loves the opponent and the opponent be moved by this show of unconditional love. 3) When both fail, non-cooperation is the only policy (see 11—53). Ultimately, the *satyagrahi* is one who lives in line with the essence of being, the universally valid laws of nature.

e. *Jesus the Satyagrahi*. Gandhi believed Jesus to be one of the most significant influences on his understanding of *satyagraha*, one who lived all the stages of the *satyagrahi* - a revolutionary in the real sense, one who sought a change from *himsa*:

‘Jesus was the most active resister known perhaps to history. This was non-violence par excellence’ (II—19)

Jesus was for Gandhi a man who had achieved divine status by attaining the highest degree of perfection that is possible for a person insofar as his life was based on the principles of *satyagraha*.<sup>193</sup> A crucial aspect of his understanding is based on the cross:

‘Jesus a man who was completely innocent, offered himself as a sacrifice for the good of others, including his enemies, and became the ransom of the world. It was a perfect act’ (II—166)

This connects with the discussion above of self-suffering and atonement. Important to the idea of self-suffering, and in this case, the cross, Jesudasan writes:

‘The dynamism of the cross is to bring the inflictor to recognize with the victim the unity of all in Christ. The dynamism of non-violence is to move the inflictor

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<sup>192</sup> Jesudasan, (1984) 97.

<sup>193</sup> See Jesudasan, (1984) 113.

to recognize with the victim their common humanity. To bring about this recognition of faith, suffering is necessary'.<sup>194</sup>

Sobrino similarly observes how Jesus and the faithful martyrs create, through their suffering, realities and values opposed to violence, and selfish injustice. So they bring salvation and light.<sup>195</sup> Caird observes Jesus' identification with the sinner: 'Jesus chose to identify himself with sinful men, to befriend them, to make common cause with them, to make himself accountable for their sins'.<sup>196</sup> Gandhi saw that the importance of the cross is exemplary and if those who follow his way are not prepared to suffer, Jesus' action was in vain:

'Jesus lived and died in vain if he did not teach us to regulate the whole of life by the eternal law of love'. (1—181)

The atonement value is the change that occurs in the inflictor of violence as well as the change that must happen in Jesus' followers who must become *satyagrahis* by being prepared to suffer and die.

f. *Summary*. It has been seen that Gandhi desired total victory for his understanding of truth. His belief is in the Third Way: nonviolent revolution achieved through suffering, witness and non-compromise. However, Gandhi believed the struggle between violence and nonviolence was connected with a conflict between the ultimate principle, *satya*, upon which the cosmos is formed, against violence which is alienated from the ultimate principle, *satya*. It was therefore a religious understanding affecting every

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<sup>194</sup> Jesudasan, (1984) 116.

<sup>195</sup> Sobrino, (1997) 53.

<sup>196</sup> Caird, (1955) 2.

area of life and politics. In killing, one is estranged from *satya*, and that is far worse than any violent death, therefore, death was better than killing.

#### 6. *Gandhian Nonviolence and Perspective C*

It has emerged that many of the understandings of Revelation in C resemble aspects of nonviolence and particularly Gandhi's thought and action. It is surprising that such similarities have not been observed. There is little doubt that Gandhi would have appreciated Revelation and its Jesus understood in the way of C. However, Gandhi was not a NT exegete and the subtlety of the text would not have been appreciated by him. The argument here is that even NT exegetes miss this subtlety and rebirthing of tradition.

C cannot ideally be treated as a homogeneous group in all readings of Revelation. For the purpose of this study, this group has been delineated as representing similarities in particularly significant areas relevant to nonviolence. The similarities hardly need setting out between Gandhi and C. Nonviolence permeates the work of C, but not nonviolence in the way that Yarbrow Collins posits, as i.e. a way of nonviolence inciting God to avenge his martyrs. Rather, the cross, martyrdom and witness of Jesus and his followers are in essence the way of life that might transform the violent oppressor from evil and return to the ordering principle of the cosmos, goodness, love and compassion. Moreover, within C, nonviolence is not passive but active and war is indeed in the mind of Revelation's Jesus as was certainly the case with Gandhi and in his struggle against the South African and British oppressors. Noncooperation was synonymous with nonviolence. Revelation's use of war metaphor resembles Gandhi's; central for him was that those who are ready to 'fight' make the best *satyagrahi*.

Therefore, in view of the similarities between C and the Gandhian approach, which exist without any actual indebtedness of C to the Gandhian approach, it is the task of this thesis to test C's general hypothesis regarding transforming the antagonist through suffering, and to see whether it can be taken further in understanding the logic and the violence of Revelation by using a Gandhian approach heuristically.



## PART I

### ESTABLISHING THE CONTEXTS

## Chapter 1

### OT AND LATER JEWISH TRADITIONS HOSTILE TO OPPRESSION

In the Introduction both the OT and later Jewish tradition were considered to be significant in the way a people perceive their lives in terms of those within the same tradition and those outside the tradition, i.e. the alien. In this opening chapter the kind of worldview that John inherited will be explored through traditions seen in the OT and later Jewish tradition. The concern will be particularly with OT and later Jewish traditions that are hostile to their own violent, plundering rulers and to the nations who plundered their wealth and sought to destroy their tradition. It will later be seen that John throughout Revelation, especially in Rev.18 (see chapter 6, section 4), is influenced by OT and later Jewish traditions which are hostile to violence and oppression manifested in brutal violence and plunder as well as more subtle forms, through trade, political and economic policy. The view of such traditions being hostile to violence and oppression along with the hope that God will redeem the innocent is important in understanding Revelation.

The concern with nonviolent resistance, so significant to this thesis, relies heavily upon a desire to see justice established, in which all people can live in peace. In the Introduction, the evolution towards a nonviolent attitude begins with a need to see oppression and violence eradicated. There must be the heart of a 'fighter' in the nonviolent revolutionary and not the heart of one who flees and compromises. The traditions that will be explored in this chapter, and to which John was an heir, reveal the heart of a 'fighter' who with total and utter passion hopes for justice.

### 1. *Oracles Against the Nations (OANs)*

OANs function to prepare for the execution of warfare and the hope of victory.<sup>1</sup> Scholars observe that many of the OANs show evidence of being preserved and deposited from one period to another.<sup>2</sup> Geyer writes: 'The oracle against Babylon in Is.13 was presumably originally directed against Assyria if it comes from Isaiah himself. The transfer can be made without disturbing the text other than changing the name of the country'.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, little in the oracles facilitates understanding precise issues the prophet may be facing. However, the important conclusion to be drawn from this is that John, like previous prophets, interprets and identifies his world and its rulers, questions relating to life and death, friend and foe, through his tradition. The interpretation of society through one's tradition, and the application of aggressive traditions hostile to the powerful nations functions to remind the heirs of those who have gone before and those who have died and suffered to stay firm to the tradition in spite of suffering and death and thus preserve and strengthen social identity.<sup>4</sup> John in Rev.18 delivers an oracle against Babylon; he sees the ruling power of his day as an oppressing and violent force. John is influenced by the oracles he reads in the OT *vis-à-vis* against oppressive empires; in utilizing this form of writing John too prepares for war and hopes for victory.

What is this tradition? Hayes points to a pre-Hebrew prophetic oracle against

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<sup>1</sup>Hayes, (1968) 84.

<sup>2</sup> This is not just an aspect of OANs. In Dan.7.1-8, a text important to Rev.13, the beast in Rev.13 resembles all four of those in Dan.7. The significant point is that empires play much the same role in succession to each other.

<sup>3</sup> Geyer, (1986) 136; also Hayes, (1968) 81.

<sup>4</sup> This will be discussed in chapter 2 on martyrdom. See Malina, (1981) 26 and Berger, (1986) 101.

Babylon which illustrates the key themes from the Mari site:

‘O Babylon! Why dost thou ever (evil)? I will gather thee in the net! Thy god is a wild ox (?). The houses of the seven confederates and all their possessions I shall place in Zimrilim’s hand’<sup>5</sup>

The address resembles the OT prophets’ OAN. First, Babylon’s fall forms the aspect of an oracle of salvation; second, the prophet is proclaiming that as long as Babylon does evil, the king of Mari, Zimrilim, and his nation, will be saved. Part of the salvation theme is to plunder Babylon. A feature of Holy War tradition is that of the defeated army leaving behind the treasure that it had acquired.

## *2. Plundering and Being Plundered in the OT*

a. *Israel and its beginnings* Exodus illustrates the important theme of plunder:

‘The People of Israel had also done as Moses told them, for they asked of the Egyptians jewellery of silver and gold, and clothing; and YHWH had given the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have what they asked. Thus they despoiled the Egyptians’ (Ex. 12.35-36).

The items plundered are those from which the Israelite’s sacred items are to be made (Ex.25-28).<sup>6</sup> Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28, the covenantal curses, promise that wealth was a blessing from God if his people kept his covenant.<sup>7</sup> Further, Israel will conquer its enemies (Lev.26.7) if faithful, but if not, its land will be desolate

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<sup>5</sup> Hayes, (1968) quoted on 85.

<sup>6</sup> Schoff, (1920) 111 notes that what is plundered from Egypt becomes the items which forms Israel’s sacred traditions. This will be seen to be important especially in chapter 6 section 4.

<sup>7</sup> Chilton, (1990) 454. Form critics would argue that these texts are much later than they are presented in the canon. The concern here is John’s own understanding of the canon. Also, the intertextuality as he perceived it.

(Lev.26.31-33). For a later writer, these texts set the scene for much of what is seen throughout the Bible and later. Israel rebels and its punishment is parallel with that depicted in Lev.26 and Deut.28. 1 Kings 10 and 2 Chron.1.16 present Israel as very rich in the merchandise that is mentioned as plundered from Egypt. Such goods constitute the materials from which Solomon has the temple built. Solomon is not presented as a war hero (1 Chron. 22.9), but his father had set the scene for Solomon by war (1 Sam.30.20; 2 Sam.8.7, 11; 1 Kings 7.51; 1 Chron.22.5, 14). King Jehoshaphat is said to have great riches because he did what was right in God's eyes (2 Chron.17.5; 18.1). The nations feared Jehoshaphat and tribute was brought of silver (2 Chron.17.10-11). It is reported that nations came up against Judah, but among the nations there came such fear that they fled leaving cattle, goods, clothing and precious things as spoil for Judah (2 Chron.20.25).

However, Israel did not keep the covenant, and consequently Israel would suffer as promised (Lev.26 and Deut.28). This is indeed the testimony of the prophets. The two nations will have their wealth plundered and will be made desolate. Hosea describes Israel as a luxuriant vine, the more she gains the more altars she builds, her heart is false (Hos.10.1-2). Israel's wealth will be plundered by Assyria (Hos.10.6; Ezek.23.7). Israel's sin is not worshipping God or keeping God's covenant. Sin is connected also with a wrong attitude to wealth. Israel commits murder (Hos.4.2; Ezek.22.5, 29), is greedy (Hos.7.14), and did not thank God for her wealth, but rather decked herself with ring and jewellery to worship Baal and play the harlot (Hos.2.13; cf. Jer.4.30; Ezek.23.40). The covenant of Yahweh demands justice and a just economic policy which Israel did not obey (see for example Lev.25.35-38 cf. Amos 2.7 et al).

Following Israel's failure, Hosea testifies:

'They [Israel] shall return to the land of Egypt, and Assyria shall be their king' (11.5)

Moreover, Israel's status as a nation of priests is also rejected:

'because you have rejected knowledge, I reject you from being a priest to me' (Hos.4.6 cf. Ezek.21.26).

In Hos.11.5 Assyria becomes the new Egypt, a place of bondage (cf. the prediction of faithlessness in Lev.26.38-39). Hos.4.6 resembles Ex.19.6 (cf. Zech.14.20-21; Jer.23) in which Israel is given the privileged status of priests. It may be suggested that there is no connection with wealth; however, being a priest is to have much wealth (Is.61.6, 10 see discussion below). Moreover, Assyria will seize their wealth (Ezek.23.7).

b. *Assyria* Israel's punishment is to be plundered by Assyria. However, with the coming of Assyria, is also her fall, resulting from sin. Nahum and Habakkuk attack Assyria as one who has plundered and, therefore, will be plundered (Nah.2.9 cf Is.27; Nah.3.1; Hab.1.16; Hab.2.6). Assyria's sins are specified in terms of harlotry, murder, theft and sorcery. Nahum describes Assyria as a sorcerer who through sorcery beguiled the people of God (Nah.3.4):

מרב זנוני זונה טבות חן בעלת כשפים

המכרת גוים בזנוניה ומשפחות בכשפיה

Tr: Because of the wantonness of the wanton, alluring, mistress of sorcery, who *sold* the nations by her wantonness and the tribes by her sorcery.

Assyria is also presented as a harlot (זנה) who has relations for political and monetary gain. Significantly, sorcery too is connected with this. Fraser connects sorcery with luxury and trade suggesting that this underlies v.4: 'after her conquests Nineveh endeavoured to build herself up as a centre of world commerce. Presumably this was

for the sake of the wealth and luxuries to be gained thereby. She approached people with her wares. She deceived them by her lies. She enervated them with her luxuries'.<sup>8</sup> This suggestion is strengthened inasmuch as Nahum links the merchant theme with a plunderous nation:

'You increased your merchants more than the stars of the heavens' (3.16)

It is this connection that should make scholars more cautious about emending *המכרת* (from *מכר*) to *הכמרת* (from *כמר*) in 3.4.<sup>9</sup> Nahum's emphasis on trade in v.16 would suggest that this theme should be seen in v.4. With Fraser, it is proposed that in v.4, Assyria through her promises of improved trading deceived the nations, which resulted in some growing rich (especially merchants), and many becoming poor.<sup>10</sup> With this is the threat to Israel's identity. Through trade and the gaining profit of Assyria, Israelite people may be tempted to compromise so that they may gain.

This is seen in Ezekiel's presentation of the sorcerer. She is one who seeks gain (13.18) and does so by deceiving people by her beliefs. In some way she held the power of life and death (13.19). Those who listened to her lies would live and the faithful would die. The sorcerer, although a historical reality is in mind, could also be Assyria who did what the sorcerer in Ezekiel did. Further, she weakened the foundations of the faithful (13.22). However, the hope is that she will fall (13.23).

It has been seen that OANs serve an important function of affirming social identity. Esler discusses from an anthropological perspective the significance of sorcery

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<sup>8</sup> Fraser, (1979) 766.

<sup>9</sup> Coggins, (1985) 49 follows major OT commentators in supposing that the 'k' and 'm' have been transposed.

<sup>10</sup> Ezek.28.5 makes the connection between trade and violence more explicit (see discussion below).

accusation in the first century.<sup>11</sup> His observations are significant for accusations of sorcery against any enemy, whether Assyria or Rome. He comments *vis-à-vis* pre-literate cultures: ‘An accusation of witchcraft or sorcery made by a community will generally function to clarify and affirm social relations’.<sup>12</sup> Thus, in the case of Nahum, the prophet accuses the outsider, Assyria, so as to affirm his community’s boundaries *vis-à-vis* Assyria.<sup>13</sup> Assyria is an outsider who is depicted as threatening the prophet’s community. Sorcery becomes a symbol of that which attacks the vulnerable goodness of community by way of an outside power.<sup>14</sup> As Esler writes: ‘witchcraft comprised moral judgement. To say “It is witchcraft” was virtually synonymous with saying “It is bad”’.<sup>15</sup>

With Assyria’s fall, hope entered into the hearts of many:

‘Because you (Assyria) have plundered many nations, all the remnant of the peoples shall plunder you, for the blood of men and violence to the earth, to the cities and all who dwell therein’ (Hab.2.8).

Here can be seen the theme of salvation to which the prophet looks, i.e. Israel will be restored with all its wealth and violence will be visited upon the violent.

c. *Judah* Judah survived much of Assyria’s attack. It was not until the coming of

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<sup>11</sup> Esler, (1994) 131-146.

<sup>12</sup> Esler, (1994) 141.

<sup>13</sup> It is interesting to note Esler’s (1994) 141 comments regarding accusing those within one’s own community of sorcery, the accusation seeks to view the accused as belonging to a rival faction. This is indeed seen in Ezek.16.17-23. Note also the accusations made by the Elder Pliny which associate magic and Jewish rites and customs (*Nat.Hist.*30.11).

<sup>14</sup> Esler, (1994) 141.

<sup>15</sup> Esler, (1994) 139.



Babylon that Judah experienced the plunder of its wealth resulting from much the same sins as Israel:

‘And I will give Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon. Moreover, I will give all the wealth of the city, all its gains, all its prized belongings, and all the treasures of the treasures of the kings of Judah into the hand of the enemy and their enemy who shall plunder them’ (Jer.20.4-5 cf. 5.17, 28)

The loss of wealth is common in Jeremiah suggesting the familiarity of such ideas (cf. Jer. 15.13 which occurs also in 17.3). Jeremiah makes clear that Judah’s sin is that it plundered and did not execute justice, and thus failed to obey God’s covenant (Lev. 26 and Deut. 28; see Jer.22.13-14 cf. 17.11; Ezek.12.19-20; 17.19-23; 22.25; 22.29; 34.17-22 et al especially Amos). Ezek.34.17-22 suggests an economic critique of Judah. V.20 draws attention to the fat and the lean sheep. Taylor suggests that the fat sheep are the bullying merchant classes who have taken for themselves all the good things and the lean sheep are the victims of the merchant class.<sup>16</sup> The picture is of a class who have the best and prevent the rest sharing so that the others must eat what is trodden on by the rich which Eichrodt believes points to the propertied classes.<sup>17</sup> Merchants are those who pick from the poor the best of the lands’ resources leaving little for the rest. Yet the merchants’ *raison d’être* depends on the excessive needs of the landed property. Thus, Ezekiel attacks Judah’s wealthy for allowing an economic system to operate that could dispossess a people of basic rights. To this extent Ezekiel is in line with Amos and the covenant. However, if Judah obeys God its wealth will be great (Jer.17.24-25; 31.12).

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<sup>16</sup> Taylor, (1969) 221.

<sup>17</sup> Eichrodt, (1970) 473.

d. *Tyre* Tyre is presented as a wealthy, trading nation (Ezek.27.3) who becomes arrogant and claims to be a god (28.2, 9). Moreover, its desire for abundance results in violence:

‘In the abundance of your trade you were filled with violence, and you have sinned’  
(Ezek.28.5 cf. 26.17)

Tyre is said to have brought about Jerusalem’s destruction (Ezek.26.2). However, Tyre, like Israel and Assyria, is depicted as a harlot (Is.23.14-15) who will be plundered as she plundered (26.12; 28.7) and will lose what she has to her enemies:

‘They will make a spoil of your riches and a prey of your merchandise; they will break down your wall and destroy your pleasant houses...’ (Ezek. 26.12)

With the loss of its wealth Tyre is as a city devoid of joy in which the music of song and the sound of lyres will be heard no more (26.13). However, the fall of Tyre will result in Judah’s salvation and the restoration of its wealth (Joel 3.5-6, 8 cf. Ezek.28.6,9,13, esp.16; Hab.2.8).

e. *Babylon* Jeremiah presents Babylon as one who will plunder Judah of its wealth:

‘And I will give Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon. Moreover, I will give all the wealth of the city, all its gains, all its prized belongings, and all the treasures of the kings of Judah into the hand of the enemy who shall plunder them...’ (Jer. 20.4-5 cf. Ezek.16.37-39).

Later the prophecy is fulfilled:

‘Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon has devoured me, he has crushed me; he has made me an empty vessel . . . he filled his belly with my delicacies (MT: עֲדִינָה)’ (Jer. 51.34).

Jeremiah seems to have ancient Israelite luxury in mind (cf. 1 Kings 10; 2 Chron.1.16) which was taken from the Israelite people because of their violence, exploitation and blasphemy (Jer.15.2; 17.3; 20.4-5; Ezek.12.19-20 et al). 2 Kings 25.7ff reports the

king of Babylon's destruction of the Jerusalem temple in which the bronze, silver and gold of the temple was carried away. 2 Chron.36.7 reports that they were deposited in the king of Babylon's temple.<sup>18</sup>

Associated with exploitation is Judah's love of wealth in which she played the harlot with other nations in order to acquire wealth. Through trade with Babylon Judah increased her dainties (Ezek.16.29). This presentation of Babylon as a merchant nation again links exploitation and plunder with being a merchant nation (as with Assyria and Tyre cf 17.4, 12).

However, with Babylon's gain comes its fall:

"Now therefore hear this, you lover of pleasures, who sit securely (עֲדִינָה), who say in your heart, 'I am (ἐγὼ εἰμι), and there is no one besides me; I shall not sit as a widow or know the loss children'.

These two things shall come to you in a moment, in one day; the loss of children and widowhood shall come upon you in full measure, in spite of your many sorceries (LXX: ἐν τῇ φαρμακείᾳ σου; MT: כִּשְׁפִיךְ) and the great power of your enchantments' (Is.47.8-9 cf. Is.13.16-17)

Jeremiah describes the fall more vividly:

'Babylon shall become a heap of ruins, the haunt of jackals, a horror and a hissing without inhabitant' (Jer.51.37 cf. Lev.26 and Deut.28).

The sorcery in Is.47.8 may be juxtaposed with Nah.3.4. Sorcery in Nahum is connected with wealth acquired by plunder through trade. The author was motivated by the need to strengthen group identity (see above Esler's discussion regarding Assyria).<sup>19</sup> Whybray comments: 'in condemning excessive luxury Deutero-Isaiah

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<sup>18</sup> See also Jer.52.12ff.

<sup>19</sup> However, this is not to suggest that the art of magic is not present in the two texts. This important

stands in the classical prophetic tradition'.<sup>20</sup> The language is not dissimilar to that used of Israel if it should be unfaithful (Lev.26 and Deut.28).

With the oracle against the nations, there comes again the hope of salvation. Trito-Isaiah writes:

'but you shall be called the priests of the LORD, people shall speak of you as the ministers of our God; you shall eat the wealth of the nations, and in their riches you shall glory' (Is.61.6; also Is.58.12; Jer.17.24; Ezek.39.10; Nah.2.2 contrast with Ezek.21.26 and Hos.4.6).

The words of Trito-Isaiah are reminiscent of Ex.19.6 in which Moses is told by Yahweh that his people are a kingdom of priests (cf. Zech.14.20-21).<sup>21</sup> A time is expected when all Israel will be priests, those who will be privileged, and the foreign nations will keep them in goods and wealth. In 61.10 it is said that Yahweh has clothed the priests with salvation, righteousness, garlands and jewels. Wealth is connected with salvation, and such have been taken from Israel when she lost her status as a priest (Hos.4.6 cf. Ezek.21.26). עֲרִיכָה is connected with dainties and wealth throughout the OT (see Is.47.8). Connected with wealth and ultimate salvation of the Israelite is the garden of Eden and the temple. LXX understood the 'garden of Eden' as a place of luxury, daintiness.<sup>22</sup>

MT Gen.2.15

LXX Gen.2.15

וַיִּקַּח יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶת הָאָדָם וַיְנַחֲהוּ

καὶ ἔλαβε Κύριος ὁ Θεὸς τὸν ἄνθρωπον ὃν ἔπλασε, καὶ ἔθετο αὐτὸν ἐν τῷ παραδείσῳ τῆς τρυφῆς

בְּגֶן עֵדֶן

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point is that sorcery was hated within the OT (see Esler, [1994] 139) .

<sup>20</sup> Whybray, (1990) 121.

<sup>21</sup> This idea occurs rarely.

<sup>22</sup> The connection between עֲרִיכָה and עֵדֶן is made by Zimmerli, (1983) 92.

The idea is present in Ezek.28.13 *vis-à-vis* Tyre and yet it was taken from her. The Jerusalem Temple was a place of luxury and a place of paradise like Eden (note the presence of precious stones in John's new Jerusalem in Rev.21 cf. Ezek.36.35). Barker suggests that the temple represents Eden, observing the similarities between the two (Gen.2 with Ezek.40.31, 24; 41.17ff; 47.1-12).<sup>23</sup> Also to be noted is the idea of linking the garden with the holy mountain (28.14) thus linking Eden with the place of the Temple. Fishbane similarly writes: 'the typological reuses of Edenic mythography in post-exilic prophecy is nowhere more forcefully evident than in connection with the new Temple'.<sup>24</sup> Further he acknowledges the reason for such a connecting of the two: 'by infusing Temple imagery with Edenic symbolism, Ezekiel, like other prophets after him, projected an ancient nostalgia for spatial harmony and blessing into the future and thus reveals the depth of the Israelite yearning for restoration and the axial significance of the Temple'.<sup>25</sup> Each supplantation had its own Eden, its sacred paradise, and it was destroyed and plundered at some point. It is the items connected with a nation's sacred traditions that are plundered.<sup>26</sup> It is within the sacred places that a nation believes to be the place of perfection and joy, but unfortunately, understood to be achievable only by might and power.

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<sup>23</sup> Barker, (1991) 69.

<sup>24</sup> Fishbane, (1985) 370-371.

<sup>25</sup> Fishbane, (1985) 371.

<sup>26</sup> Of course, also, wealth was often kept in temples for safekeeping like a bank.

f. *Persians* Haggai who prophesied during the second year of Darius (1.1) proclaims an oracle against the nations:

‘For thus says YHWH, once again, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land; and I will shake the nations, so that the treasures of all the nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with splendour, says YHWH of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, says YHWH’ (Hag.2.6-8 cf vv.21-23)

Haggai sees the fall of Persia during its time of economic upheaval (Hag.1.6). However, this OAN has a timelessness and could be directed against any of the previous nations. Similarly, the author of Zech.1-8 used the ancient oracles against the nations *vis-à-vis* Persia at the same time as Haggai. Persia is attacked for the violence it has done to God’s people, it is compared to the other violent, plundering supernations (Zech.1.15). Further it is said:

‘Behold, I will shake my hand over them, and they shall become plunder for those who served them’ (Zech.2.9)

In the above texts the plunderer who is at ease will experience plunder. Moreover, in Hag.2.7-9, with the fall of the nations, comes the hope of restoration for God’s people including the gaining of wealth.

g. *The Greeks*. The author of Zech.9-14 probably belongs to the time of the hellenistic empires (9.13). Deutero-Zechariah uses the ancient oracle against the nations:

‘Behold, a day of YHWH is coming, when the spoil taken from you Israel will be divided in the midst of you’ (14.1).

Here is found again the theme of restoration of that which was taken from God’s people. Daniel uses the holy war tradition and with it the plunder of wealth and riches, especially 11.2b-39. Goldingay commenting on Dan.11.2b-39 observes that the

content of the message combines a considerable amount of historical information on the Persian and Greek periods with interpretation by means of a considerable number of allusions to passages from Scripture. These may portray the history of the period as a recapitulation of crises in earlier centuries, so that typologically the earlier Assyrian enemy from the north stands for the Syrians.<sup>27</sup> Part of the OT background is the plunder theme in which the southern king will plunder the king from the north (Dan.11.8-9). Such items of plunder are used to honour foreign gods (Dan.11.38). In Dan.11.43 the king of north will gain control:

‘He shall become the ruler of the treasures of gold and of silver, and all the precious things of Egypt...’

h. *Psalm 49* Ps.49 resembles the OANs in regards attitudes towards wealth:

‘Why should I fear in times of trouble, when the iniquity of my persecutors surrounds me, those who trust in their wealth and boast of the abundance of their riches? Truly no one can ransom their lives or give to God the price of their lives’ (vv.5-7)

The setting here is that of the faithful experiencing troubles under the foreign empire. Eaton writes: ‘Under the heathen empires, apostasy and unscrupulousness often offered an Israelite the easiest road to high office and wealth; poverty and piety thus belonged together’.<sup>28</sup> The psalm would have functioned well to strengthen group identity against the onslaught of the seductive rich empire - apostasy must be rejected. The psalmist describes what will happen to the rich abusers (v.14). No one can carry anything to the grave (v.17). However, the faithful’s fate will be different and is seen

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<sup>27</sup> Goldingay, (1987) 293.

<sup>28</sup> Eaton, (1967) 134.

in v.15 (Hb. v16):

אך אלהים יפדה נפשי מיד שאול כי יקחני סלה

There is hope that God will vindicate beyond the bounds of human flesh (cf. Ps.16.10; 73 and 78). Russell writes:

‘the problem of the prosperity of the wicked and the suffering of the righteous turns the psalmists’ thoughts to that of continuing fellowship with God at whose right hand there are “pleasures for evermore” (Ps.16.11). There is certainly no clearly defined doctrine of a life beyond death encountered here, but at best only a glimmering of hope’.<sup>29</sup>

### 3. *Plundering and Being Plundered in Later Jewish Literature*

a. *1 Enoch*<sup>30</sup> The similarity of themes, using the timeless universal language of the prophets’ oracles, can be seen in 1 Enoch, and this supports the importance of this theme at a time later than the OT prophets. The above themes are especially prominent in the Epistle of Enoch (91-105), but also throughout.<sup>31</sup> Barker points out that the bulk of the epistle resembles the OT prophets with threats of judgement upon sinners, and encouragement for the faithful.<sup>32</sup> In 94.7 those who have grown rich by sin will be destroyed. The author condemns the rich for relying on wealth (94.8), presumably because they gained it by violence and plunder (94.9; 97.8; 97.9-10; 99.13; 102.9). Yet the lot of the wealthy is to suffer (103.5).

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<sup>29</sup> Russell, (1960) 144; see Bauckham, (1998) 80-95.

<sup>30</sup> Translation by E. Isaac in Charlesworth.

<sup>31</sup> Nickelsburg, (1972) 112-130 provides an excellent discussion of the epistle and gives a detailed comparison between 1 Enoch 104 and Deut.28 which suggests the importance of this chapter.

<sup>32</sup> Barker, (1988) 30.



1 Enoch 101.4 shares certain similarities with Ezek.27.35. God warns the unrighteous that he can destroy them and that the sailors will be in fear. Indeed, merchants may well be in the mind of the author here:

‘they are seized by fear, for they will discharge all their valuable property - the goods that are with them - into the sea’

In 104.3-4 the fate of the wealthy and all those who assisted them will be similar to those wealthy nations that have gone before:

‘Your cry [the righteous] shall be heard... For all your tribulations shall be demanded for investigation from the authorities - from everyone who assisted those who plundered you...There shall be a fire for you’.

Chapter 63 depicts the lot of the kings, rulers, and landlords who realize their oppression with shame before the exalted Son of Man:

‘Our souls are satiated with exploitation money which could not save us from being cast into the oppressive Sheol’ (63.11).

b. 2 *Baruch* 2 Baruch is generally accepted as written in the early second century from Palestine.<sup>33</sup> The description of the Temple destruction by the Babylonians in 586 BCE in chapter 80 expects the readers to see the parallel of the destruction and plunder of the temple in 70 CE. The author expresses confusion as to why those who have plundered are not themselves destroyed (82.3 cf. 4 Ezra. 3.33). However, the writer believes that the enemy, in spite of her beauty, will fall (82.7). Indeed, the author is concerned that his own community does not participate with the enemy and be beguiled by her beauty and her delights but fix its eyes on God’s promises (83.5). The writer is not interested in whom the particular nation is, he has traced the

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<sup>33</sup> See Klijn in Charlesworth, *Pseudepigrapha* 617.

trajectory of plunder and violence from the beginning, all ruling nations are the same. The text is ostensibly about the Babylonians, but indirectly about the Romans. The author is using typology. For the author, the keeping of the covenant will see all things restored and the enemies will fall:

‘And every delight and all splendor which exists now changes into ruin of silence (83.14).

The end to which the author looks (83.5) is that God’s promises will be fulfilled and that everyone will be judged according to his works (46.6). The hope of the end is that creation will be changed although little detail is given (32.6; 44.12).

c. *1QpHab* This text is a *peshar* directed against Roman rule. Rome is the plunderer but the attack could be directed against any ruling nation, Chaldeans has been replaced with Kittim:

‘The Kittim...they shall gather in their[defeated] riches, together with all their booty’ (6.5)

A significant line from 1Qp.Hab is the attack on the Wicked Priest who compromised with the ruling nation. The priest is seen as living off the wealth of the rulers, as did the merchants:

‘...he forsook God and betrayed the precepts for the sake of riches. He robbed and amassed the riches of men of violence who rebelled against God, and he took the wealth of the peoples...’ (8.10)<sup>34</sup>

Later the last priests of Jerusalem are condemned:

‘the last priests of Jerusalem, who amass money and wealth by plundering the people. But in the last days, their riches and booty shall be delivered into the hands of the army of the Kittim (9.5ff).

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<sup>34</sup> See discussion regarding the identity of the wicked priest and the exact issues of conflict in VanderKam, (1994) 102-104. VanderKam does not pick up on the issue of compromise

d. *War Scroll (1QM)* Generally accepted as a prophetic narrative against the Romans in symbolic language, but described is the ultimate war in which all enemies are seen as one. In this scroll is found the holy war tradition which has been seen to be prominent in Exodus in which God's people will be victorious against their enemies with God fighting for them (God fought against Egypt for Israel). Again can be found the theme of plunder and many of the expensive items that have been observed in the OT emerge in the scroll. For example, the seven priests of Aaron are described as dressed in battle raiment made from fine linen, which will be embroidered with blue, purple and scarlet thread (7.10). Victory includes the hope that God will gather the spoils, that there will be a multitude of cattle in the fields and that silver, gold and precious stones will be restored to God's people (12.10). In addition, there is a closeness with Jer.4.30; 10.4; Hos.2.13; Ezek.16.10; 28.13; and 4 Ezra.15.46 in which the idea of being bedecked in extravagant items is encountered. In the scroll it is a time when God's people will be bedecked with glorious jewels (12.15).

#### *4. Summary of Findings*

The OT prophets present the supernational's greatness and success in terms of wealth leading to arrogant claims of divinity (Is.47.8 cf. Ezek.28.9 regarding the King of Tyre). Moreover, the prophets present the ruling nation's sin not only in terms of its religious blasphemy but in plunder. Plunder has resulted in murder, caused humiliation, and led to apostasy of the defeated through bewitchment by the beauty of the conquering nation's wealth. It is the hope that the people will not participate in the ruling nation's sin, i.e. by trusting in wealth, and thus not fall as the conquering nation

will, so that, one day, she will eat from the tree of life which is in the garden of God (Gen.2.7) and where true ערִיכָה will be had. Carroll writes:

‘Babylon becomes a symbol of the oppressor. With the destruction of Babylon (whether as Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom or as a cipher of whatever imperial power dominates the people of Israel) the vindication of Zion and Israel is guaranteed and the cycle reflects the worshipping community’s liturgy of triumph’.<sup>35</sup>

Carroll, although observing this in terms of Babylon, is clear that it is any imperial power that dominates Israel that is in mind. Also of importance is the use of typology in order to correlate the new historical event with the older ones. This serves an important sociological function especially among groups who are attempting to maintain group identity. In making connections with the past they observe a pattern emerging and a sense of belonging to those who have gone before. There is, consequently, a need to honour their heritage. Fishbane observes ‘an unexpected unity of historical experience and providential continuity in its new patterns and shape’.<sup>36</sup>

The supernations are like the previous supernations. Babylon, as did its predecessors, committed violence while seizing for themselves the position of God. Thus they made for themselves sacred temples and gods from the booty of their violence and continue to want more, thus prolonging suffering. This theme is seen throughout the OT and is prominent in the Epistle of Enoch and in the Qumran commentary on Habakkuk et al. The idea of plunder through the buying and selling of the merchants also appears. It is probable that the prophet, in addressing merchant

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<sup>35</sup> Carroll, (1986) 755-756.

<sup>36</sup> Fishbane, (1985) 352.

exploitation, was referring to a precise historical example. Tyre is presented as a plundered merchant nation who seduced nations and committed violence against them (Ezek.26.12, 17; 28.5, 7). The emphasis on the merchant theme has been seen to a lesser extent *vis-à-vis* Assyria. The oracle against Tyre appropriates ancient themes. Yet the depiction of Tyre as a merchant is contemporary; Tyre was famous for her trading.<sup>37</sup> Consequently, Ezekiel emphasized in his oracle traditions relating to trade (cf. 1 Kings 10; Nah.3.4, 3.16). It is not said how being a big importer is connected with plunder and violence, but this connection was clear in the mind of the author.

## 5. Conclusions

The conclusions that are stated below are understood to have been expressed in the OANs tradition as discussed throughout this chapter.

1. An Israelite understanding of God is one who hates injustice in all its forms. Violence is not simply physically abusing another, it is the way someone lives, i.e. contrary to the covenant of God.
2. Those who plunder another and gain unjustly through the hardship of another will themselves be plundered and treated unjustly.
3. Redemption means the return of what has been plundered. An Edenic existence is hoped for when there will be peace and wealth. The hope is nationalistic, but this is to be expected. Yet, it is to be implied of those who live according to the

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<sup>37</sup> In making his argument, Provan, (1996) did not distinguish between the universals and the particular within the OT itself. This is a mistake, the merchant theme is not a timeless or universal symbol, which would suggest that when it is applied, the author is focusing on his or her own particular *Sitz im Leben*. Therefore, this has significance to John and our reading of chapter 18.

covenant of God and do not abuse another, that they too will live in peace with ample luxury.

4. Typology is a key component in the way the tradition functions. From heir to heir prophetic tradition regarding injustice is applied to the new situation and the same hope is awaited. Yet, tradition is enriched with aspects of the particular new setting, for example, the way the prophet might see the way a people suffer because of trade adds an attack particularly on the merchant class.
5. Wealth is only condemned if the possessor forgets that the wealth is God's gift (cf. Deut.8.7).
6. Holy War runs throughout the tradition, with the idea that God will act and destroy his enemies, but always by the next conquering violent power.<sup>38</sup>

The above six components represent key prophetic understandings of the way in which God works and the way he expects people to live. It is not an exhaustive depiction, but relevant and detailed enough to provide a context from which John drew inspiration and understanding. These six components will elucidate the way John also attacks his own people and the ruling nation of his own time. In comparing the Gandhian *ideal*, nonviolence is not something that OT shares with such an *ideal*. However, all six components would embrace the Gandhian *ideal* as outlined in the introduction.

In chapter 6 section 4 these concluding points and the work of this chapter will be taken up in examining Rev.18.

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<sup>38</sup> However, there are exceptions (Dan.7; Joel 3; Zech.14).

## Chapter 2

### MARTYRDOM AS A SOCIAL PHENOMENON

In chapter 1 an aspect of the OT prophetic outlook was observed. An antagonistic stance was taken against powerful, violent nations. Victory was hoped for within this worldview in which the plunderer would be plundered. Within the Jewish tradition, victory was looked for in different ways. The concern of this thesis is the stance taken in which death is preferred to killing, and in which victory will be gained through dying. In this chapter, the phenomenon of martyrdom will be looked at from the broader perspective of sociologists and social anthropologists.

Sociologists and social anthropologists point out that central to understanding martyr-mindedness and behaviour is the world-view from which the potential martyr comes. The Weiners point out that especially in the case of martyrdom, there is a dependence on a cultural-linguistic system that informs the potential martyr of his/her identity and therefore motivates the individual or group to act in a certain way.<sup>1</sup> John, for example, appropriated his cultural-linguistic system for the purpose of providing encouragement to bear witness to God even to the point of death, an important aspect of his interpretation, selection and development of his tradition.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Weiners, (1990) 67. This is illustrated well in the speech the mother makes concerning exhorting her seven sons to die for the law. The author emphasises that the speech was made in her own tongue (2 Mac.7.21, 27).

<sup>2</sup> Weiners, (1990) 53: 'Martyrdom is a social event intimately connected with the formation of groups and the strengthening of group identity'.

## 1. *Function*

a. *Legitimation.* Berger considers the phenomenon of legitimation in religious groups to be that of restoring the continuity between the present moment and the societal tradition.<sup>3</sup> Such legitimation can operate at several levels, using proverbs, moral maxims and traditional wisdom transmitted through story, myths and folklore.<sup>4</sup> In relation to martyrdom, tradition will be appropriated from stories of heroes who showed readiness to suffer and die for their beliefs. This relates to what the Weiners call *the theory of narration* in which martyrdom is a story;<sup>5</sup> therefore, text is an important motivating force in socialising the members of the community into the world-view for which they are prepared to die when such a world-view is challenged. To this extent, the martyrs may not necessarily be responding to a particular situation as such, but rather to the way they define the situation, which is through their tradition.<sup>6</sup> Certainly, the idea of story telling in order to further the socialisation process cannot be denied. If story telling in Ireland had not been so effective, the social boundaries between Protestant and Catholic would not be so great. Therefore, *the theory of narration* is crucial to the drawing up and maintaining of boundary lines. However, the narrating of story does not, on its own, explain the way martyrdom

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<sup>3</sup> Berger, (1990) 40.

<sup>4</sup> Berger, (1990) 31-32; related to this is the theory of social control in which the member of the group control through development of tradition. Associated with Weiners, (1990) 16 and Riddle, (1927 & 1931).

<sup>5</sup> Weiners, (1990) 15.

<sup>6</sup> Malina, (1981) 21-22 points this out in terms of his symbolic model. Here behaviour is organized around expectations that are attached to objects that are of value to the tradition. Berger, (1986) 100, writes that a social situation is what it is defined to be by its participants.



functions within the community itself and the wider society. This needs assessing.

b. *Heritage*. Crucial to the functioning and development of any society or group in the Mediterranean world, according to Malina, is the importance of heritage: 'Our ancestors passed down to us the set of lines they inherited, and with this we find ourselves in a cultural continuum that reaches back to the sources of our cultural heritage'.<sup>7</sup> Relating to this is *the theory of cultural heritage* in which martyrdom is the result of a received tradition which can be added to in each succeeding period.<sup>8</sup> This is connected with *the theory of narration* although emphasising the importance of heritage. The cultural heritage and its narratives fuel the environment of conflict and establish the social boundaries, in John's case the religious one, within which a person stands for and against. This is particularly important regarding the first-century Mediterranean to which Malina relates the model of *Dyadic Personality*, which perceives individuals as unique because they are set with other beings within unique and distinctive groups.<sup>9</sup>

c. *Honour and Shame*. Developing the discussion more precisely, the pivotal values of *honour and shame* facilitate more exactly an assessment of the issues involved within a conflict setting. *Honour* is the value of a person in their own eyes, when a person perceives that their actions reproduce the ideals of society, they would expect others in

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<sup>7</sup> Malina, (1981) 26; also Berger, (1986) 101 that our lives are in part dominated by those men of old who have been dead for generations.

<sup>8</sup> A theory associated with Turner, (1974). See discussion in Weiner, (1990) 16.

<sup>9</sup> Malina, (1990) 55; also Malina & Neyrey, (1991) 67-96.

the group to acknowledge this, i.e. give honour. *Shame* emphasises members as those who are sensitive to how others see them. The social model of ‘challenge-response game’ may explicate this phenomenon.<sup>10</sup> Here the honour of one is challenged. The *challenger* seeks to establish their honour by excelling over the *challenged*. In challenging the honour of the challenged group, the *challenger* attacks the truth and validity of the group. Martyrdom, within this model, is explicated as a response and is connected with the formation of groups and the strengthening of group identity, that is its honour.<sup>11</sup> From the perspective of Revelation, it can also be suggested that John presents the church as the challenger, i.e. the martyr’s witness is the challenge in defence of God’s honour and the attacks on the church are the beast’s response (cf. Rev.11).<sup>12</sup> Still, Revelation represents a marginalised group’s response to the dominating Empire, and martyrdom delineates the social boundaries and prevents the group from apostasy, the greatest weapon of the challenger (the beast) and the greatest fear of the respondent (the church). The Weiners comment on the paradox of martyrdom as a response to the challenge of one’s honour in that martyrdom is successful.<sup>13</sup> They comment that martyrdom validates the honour of the group and its truth. In dying for one’s beliefs and group, one refuses to acknowledge the truth and honour of the challenger, thus strengthening the respondent’s group and invalidating

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<sup>10</sup> Malina, (1981) 30.

<sup>11</sup> Weiner, (1990) 53; Riddle, (1926-27) 264-265 writes also that the function of martyrologies and apocalyptic literature is for social control of the threatened group.

<sup>12</sup> Oakman, (1993) 12 writes: ‘fundamental to an appreciation of John’s theology is the identification of his concern for God’s honor. From the standpoint of the Seer, God’s honor has been offended by the course of earthly developments’.

<sup>13</sup> Weiner, 1990) 62.

the challenger.<sup>14</sup> As the Weiners point out:

‘the martyr makes believable those abstract principles that lie at the root of human connectedness, such as kinship, religious belief, national or ethnic solidarity or the more universal principle of “humanity”. We are forced to take note of the martyr’s conviction because it appeared true, valid and convincing enough to warrant self sacrifice’.<sup>15</sup>

Therefore, martyrdom as well as serving to strengthen the community, also aims to validate its convictions to the antagonists and thus persuade them of its claims.

d. *Labelling and Deviance Theory*. Greater understanding regarding how martyrdom contributes to a group’s formation and survival can be facilitated using *labelling and deviance theory*. This theory belongs within the context of conflict when derogatory names and epithets are used against outsiders. John, for example, saw himself and the followers of Jesus as those who are considered ‘deviants’. That is those who are judged to jeopardise the interests and social standing of persons who label the behaviour or condition.<sup>16</sup> Malina and Neyrey note that the ‘deviant label’ derives from the perception of the labellers.<sup>17</sup> Such labellers are known as *agents of censure*. In the case of Rev.2.9-10, the synagogue members are the agents whom John perceives as disseminating a viewpoint to gain respectability in the eyes of Rome. Within this theory, there is the acknowledgement of response from the ‘labelled’ when the

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<sup>14</sup> Weiner, (1990) 59.

<sup>15</sup> Weiner, (1990) 52.

<sup>16</sup> Malina & Neyrey, (1991) 100.

<sup>17</sup> Malina & Neyrey, (1991) 102; see also Barclay, (1995) 115.

deviance process has been concluded. At this point there is the stage of *neutralization* in which the labelled deviants are seen to interrupt the deviance process. There are proposed strategies, from the sociology of deviance, regarding how alleged deviants deal with the label. The most appropriate form of *neutralization* for this discussion on martyrdom is that of the *transformation of the deviant label or the Condemnation of the Condemners*. John, for example, wishes to placate neither synagogue nor Roman authorities. John's writing is uncompromising and sets itself against the synagogue simply on the basis that it sees the synagogue in collusion with Rome.<sup>18</sup> John embraces his distinctive state as being an outsider *vis-à-vis* Synagogue and Rome. The Weiners note that in the strategy of *neutralization* the deviant can acknowledge such deviance, and through its glorification, the stigma of deviance can be transformed into a badge of honour.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, John encourages his group to acknowledge deviance and show pride in it. One way of so identifying with the deviant label is through readiness to die for the beliefs that they hold and which have been labelled 'deviant'. Readiness to die in this setting is encouraged by one's ability to draw from one's group's tradition other examples of people who have been ready to die and suffer for their beliefs rather than apostatize from the group. In this way martyrdom is not the deviant act of isolated individuals, but, as the Weiners comment, 'the quintessential expression of the group's values'.<sup>20</sup> This strategy of *neutralization* is connected with one of Pfuhl's five possible strategies, *the Condemnation of the Condemners*.<sup>21</sup> Malina and Neyrey write regarding

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<sup>18</sup> Argument is made more fully regarding Rev.2.9-10 in Bredin, (1998) 160-164 and in chapter 6 section 2 of this thesis.

<sup>19</sup> Weiners, (1990) 57.

<sup>20</sup> Weiners, (1990) 57.

<sup>21</sup> Pfuhl, (1980) 65-68; Malina & Neyrey, (1991) 109.

this strategy that 'it becomes an honor to have been rejected and condemned by such "morally reprehensible" people'.<sup>22</sup> Further they observe that this technique redirects the negative sanctions and condemnations from the deviant to the rule enforcers, a common apologetic approach. John, for example, accuses the synagogue of not being Ἰουδαῖοι suggesting that this honoured title was denied to John and his community, thus reversing it with *Synagogue of Satan*. Moreover, such a strategy is connected with those who resist an oppressing force by refusing to use violence. In this case, which also may apply to Revelation, readiness to die rather than use violence is a crucial act of condemning the condemners. They refuse to imitate the condemners because their actions of violence are those which condemn them. This is a point Gandhi made when commenting that nonviolence is truly revolutionary because it is contrary to the violence of the oppressors. It is possible that the condemners will become admirers of the condemned because they are prepared to die rather than kill. But equally, there is the possibility that the discrediting label is then associated with martyrdom, as for example in the case of the Black Panther movement or Western evaluation of Shiite behaviour. However, in these examples, neither group was nonviolent and martyrdom was a result of violent action. In the case of the Gandhean nonviolent action (see Introduction section 4), martyrdom is better than life, if they must shed life to live. Honour is gained in death.

The shame factor also contributes to understanding how martyrdom contributes to a group's survival in that a member of a group behaves in a way that is sensitive to how others perceive their actions, although, perhaps differently from the way that *challenge-response* or *labelling and deviance* model would explicate. Rather, *social*

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<sup>22</sup> Malina & Neyrey, (1991) 109.

*control theory*, which also connects with the need to strengthen social barriers, is a more promising model for understanding. If martyrdom or accounts of martyrdom are prominent within a group's traditions, it is probable that the group will be dedicated and focused on witnessing to their belief system, for which its own members have died. The failure would invalidate one's own honour - to become a shameless person - one who does not recognize their social boundaries. In the eyes of those outside of one's group this would be to invalidate those ancestors who suffered and died for the sake of their group. This is a powerful motive for engendering readiness to die, especially for the first-century Mediterranean dweller who, according to Malina, 'would perceive himself as unique because he was set with other beings within unique and distinctive groups'<sup>23</sup>. The understanding of individuals within the respondent group is that they conceive of themselves as interrelated to others. Consequently, it is axiomatic that such individuals test this interrelatedness with the focus of attention away from the ego albeit in the demands and expectations of others who can grant or withhold honour and reputation.<sup>24</sup>

e. *Theodicy*. Finally, the importance of theodicy *vis-à-vis* the function of martyrdom must be briefly considered. The victory and motive of the martyr's response is connected with the theodicy question insofar as, as P.L.Berger points out, the significance of any religion depends upon the credibility of the banners it puts in the hands of its members as they stand before death.<sup>25</sup> Such banners are the narratives and

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<sup>23</sup> Malina, (1990) 55.

<sup>24</sup> Malina, (1981) 55.

<sup>25</sup> Berger, (1990) 51.

traditions of its heritage, in this case biblical tradition which encourages people to think that death will result in either life in the continuance of the community or some form of life after death.

## *2. Traditions about Faithful Witnesses*

From the above discussion, it can be said that social groups find meaning and succour in their traditions. Indeed, it is more important than the *particularity* of the social setting. It is their oral and written traditions that provide the conviction, without meaning they would not be in a confrontational situation. This is illustrated by a modern example, a racist would not be prepared to die or be arrested for killing black people if s/he had not grown up within the tradition of white supremacy. It follows therefore, that John would make a selection of his tradition. Particularly important would be narratives relating to victory over the enemy through voluntary death or from suffering to motivate the inheritors of the tradition to stay firm until death in the hope of victory. Significant is the 'martyrological narrative'. The Weiners observe three components within this genre: 'The martyr's motive is clear and noble, the dramatic confrontation is fully played out in the public arena, and there are the authorised versions of the hero's death'.<sup>26</sup> Consequently, John draws upon such faithful witness traditions against the enemies in order to encourage steadfastness until death in honour of those who have gone before them and of course, because of their conviction that they are on the side of justice.

*Arguments for Borrowing.* The position of this chapter is in line with those who argue that martyrdom is developed through reflection on Hebrew traditions in the light of the

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<sup>26</sup> Weiner, (1990) 12.



social context.<sup>27</sup> Others argue that the idea of martyrdom developed in the Greek hero cults.<sup>28</sup> There is little doubt, since the work of M.Hengel, that Judaism during the Hellenistic period was influenced by Graeco-Roman culture. However, there is little evidence or reason to suggest that John would appropriate the very ideas he hates except in opposition to them,<sup>29</sup> rather he draws upon his own traditions as long as there is sufficient material, especially material that attacks the rich, ruling oppressor.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, as J.Barclay points out, there is considerable evidence of antagonism to Graeco-Roman culture among Jews.<sup>31</sup> However, it could be argued that in terms of martyrdom all nations and individuals will respect and entertain the idea of sacrificing life for a cause, whether it be for a religious belief or, for example, to save the life of a child being attacked by a wild beast. There is surely nothing new about such a social phenomenon. However, this is not group martyrology, and is neither motivated by the

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<sup>27</sup> Fischel, (1946-47); Löhse, (1955); Downing, (1963); Frend, (1965); Lampe, (1981).

<sup>28</sup> Brox, (1961); Campenhausen, (1964). S.K Williams, (1975); Wengst, (1987); Seeley, (1989 & 1990); Bowersock, (1995).

<sup>29</sup> What Barclay calls *oppositional acculturation* (1996) 97.

<sup>30</sup> It is interesting to note in Potok's novel *My Name is Asher Lev* that the young Hasidic artist appropriates the hated Christian symbol of the cross in order to comprehend his own Jewishness of suffering. For him there was no other symbol. However, such an appropriation is abhorrent to the Hasidic community. John's attitude is similar, he would not use overt foreign ideas. I agree with Bauckham (1995) 91 et al that Jews and Christians were influenced by the culture of the Graeco-Roman world. However, the dominant background is Jewish, especially regarding a text so thoroughly anti-Rome as Revelation. Yet, there is Hebrew tradition that is more compromising to the ruling nations, which presented some Jews with a reason for compromising with Rome. Thus, the dispute within Judaism (including John) still remains one of divergent interpretations of a common religious heritage. John remains revolutionary and reactionary to the ruling nation; see Barclay, (1996) 82-98 regarding levels of assimilation.



need to maintain social control nor to persuade the antagonist of the validity of one's truth claims as it is the case in Revelation and Jewish tradition. Isolated examples of heroism, as is the case in Greek thinking, do not arise in order to encourage a community to be prepared to suffer and die for their beliefs and neither do they encourage social control (shame) or persuade the antagonist as in the case of John (gaining honour).<sup>32</sup> Consequently, John must persuade people to be prepared to die for their heritage and in remembrance of those who have suffered and died for being Jewish. John does so by identifying and developing relevant martyr narratives in his tradition. The heir must honour those who have gone before, lest their ancestors be seen to have died in vain and, consequently, their traditions be in danger of dying. The Weiners note the importance of a group martyr view:

'The martyr's sacrifice implies that, according to the group's norms, this is the ideal demonstration of conviction. A loyal member is defined by implication as a person willing to sacrifice him or herself just as the martyr did. In other words, at the initial stages of group formation, martyrdom sets standards for praiseworthy acts that become standards for continued group membership'.<sup>33</sup>

In presenting a social group in continuity with suffering ancestors, membership becomes to such a group 'a serious, fateful enterprise which may demand the ultimate sacrifice. New members are thus prepared from the beginning for the possibility of paying a high price for their membership'.<sup>34</sup> In the light of this, it is likely that John's

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<sup>31</sup> Barclay, (1996) 97.

<sup>32</sup> It could be so argued with Socrates. But he hardly represents a tradition, just an individual example of a philosopher's actions, and his death is connected with the immortality of the soul.

<sup>33</sup> Weiner, (1990) 58.

<sup>34</sup> Weiner, (1990) 58.

model for encouraging his people to be faithful witnesses will be found in Jewish traditions relating to people who suffered and died as faithful witnesses. It will be shown in chapters three and four that it was not difficult to forge a continuity between John's setting and the OT *vis-à-vis* Hebrew figures who were prepared to die for their faith. It is the argument here that if John was not able to draw upon his own Hebrew tradition for examples of those who were prepared to die for their faith, it is unlikely that he would have been able to sustain social motivation to be prepared to die for their faith or indeed accentuate the polarity between his tradition and the world. However, as John interprets and develops his tradition in opposition to an antagonist, it is not denied that John may well have interpreted his tradition in the light of known heroes within the traditions of his antagonist, but in an oppositional way.

### 3. *Summary*

Martyrdom as a social phenomenon has been discussed against modern social and anthropological studies. The function of martyrdom was observed in the light of conflict theory against the background of social theories. The functions of martyrdom in general have been seen to accentuate the difference between a group's own culture and language and that of the antagonistic culture and to persuade the antagonist of the validity of their truth claims (i.e. gaining honour). It has also been seen that martyrdom is intimately related to the tradition of which it is an heir. It is unlikely that a writer would knowingly borrow from traditions that were perceived as idolatrous. More likely is the need to develop intertextually themes and traditions from one's own culture and language.

## Chapter 3

### FAITHFUL WITNESSES IN THE OT

The phrase/title 'faithful witness' is popular in Revelation for Jesus and his followers. The significance of it will be assessed in the light of the OT in chapter 7. In this chapter 'faithful witness' is taken as referring to someone who is like a martyr, one who is prepared to suffer and die for a belief or tradition. Martyrs include righteous people who have been put to death by their antagonist. Also, a righteous person who is not portrayed as choosing to die rather than apostatize, but yet dies as a result of a belief will also be considered a faithful witness as such people can become examples of martyrs for later tradition. In the case, for example, of Horst Wessel, the Nazi party activist killed in a brawl, Wessel had neither a principled motive, nor an appropriate confrontation, but his story was still narrated as that of a martyr.<sup>1</sup> Many have been killed in Ireland in the sectarian problems, some died sitting innocently in a bar when the gunmen shot them. Such figures fuel the imagination of many from both sectarian communities. They become martyr figures who died with honour. Not to be ready to die is to become a shameless person in the eyes of the community. For John, the faithful witness who although not necessarily in a position of choosing between tradition and apostasy in the original text, yet dies for the tradition, nevertheless could remain an example of significance to the later heirs and readers. Those who are ready to die often do so in the hope that other people's faith in what they died for will be strengthened by their sacrifice and the hopeful transformation of the antagonist will be achieved through it. This aspect will be observed.

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<sup>1</sup> Weiner, (1990) 12.

## 1. *Witnesses who Suffer*

Examination of OT texts will be primarily concerned not with the ‘original’ meaning, but with possible Second Temple understandings that might suggest a martyrological reading. The importance of the intertextuality of the texts is considered significant for this study as an exegete of the first century CE would allow different biblical texts to inform each other if there was some mutual relationship. Therefore, within this discussion the relationships between texts will be assessed, in some cases historical criticism may help us to appreciate the extent to which later writers may see a possible intertextual relationship as such a relationship may, indeed, originally be present.

a. *Moses*. Tradition regarding the suffering of Moses depends much on the Deuteronomist’s editing. Consequently, such a depiction will be contemporary with Jeremiah and Ezekiel.<sup>2</sup> Moses is depicted as faithful to God’s commands and suffers through the constant rebellion of Israel. Moses is the prophet sent to speak God’s words to his people. Israel has a special place as God’s witnesses to the nations (Ex.19.6). Moses is portrayed as one who communicates God’s testimonies to the people and as one whose prophecy depended on unique visions (Num.12.6-8; cf. Ex.33.9-11). Resulting from Moses’ role as God’s faithful witness is rejection by his people (Ex.6.9; 14.11; 15.24; 16.2-3; 17.2-4; 32).

Evidence that Moses was willing to die for his people is found in Ex.32.30-33. Here Moses, as in other places, attempts to prevent Israel from being punished for their sins. Hengel, as do the majority of scholars,<sup>3</sup> suggests that this text is one of the rare

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<sup>2</sup> Von Rad, (1975) 276.

<sup>3</sup> North, (1956) 54; von Rad, (1977); Hyatt, (1983); Seitz, (1989).

occurrences of the idea of the giving of one's life to atone for the guilt of others in the OT.<sup>4</sup> Hengel writes: 'Moses wants to make atonement, offers himself as *koper*, i.e. offers his existence which is written in the book of life. This is a substitute offering of his life through a total representative sacrifice'.<sup>5</sup> However, Hengel's reading of the text is not without its problems. The argument that Moses offers his life is based on the following words (Ex.32.32):

מחני נא מספרי אשר כתבת

If God does not forgive his people, Moses no longer wishes to live. Presumably, if they are forgiven, Moses will live. It is unlikely that the atonement will be Moses' sacrifice. Rather, Moses wishes to die with his people.<sup>6</sup> Instead, Moses offers atonement by intercession. Intercessor is a key attribute of Moses.<sup>7</sup> Another tradition states that Moses, as a consequence of Israel's rebellion, lay prostrate before Yahweh for forty days and forty nights with no bread or water in order that Yahweh would not punish his people (Deut.9.18). Moses suffered and was prepared to die through lack of food and water, in order to persuade God to forgive them. However, there is no indication of him offering his life as a sacrifice. Consequently, if God does not forgive them he wishes to die with them.<sup>8</sup>

However, this neither reduces the importance of the text, nor denies that the text

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<sup>4</sup> Hengel, (1981) 8.

<sup>5</sup> Hengel, (1981) 78.

<sup>6</sup> Williams, (1975) 103; see Lyonnet, (1970) 123; van Henten, (1997) 161.

<sup>7</sup> This interpretation is confirmed by TDOT VII, 294-5 - כפר can be understood as an act of intercession.

<sup>8</sup> Meeks, (1967) 204.

could be read in later tradition as Moses offering his life.<sup>9</sup> Moses is seen as suffering for his people when he prays that God would let him enter the promised land. However, Moses declared to the people that:

‘Yahweh was angry with me on your account, and would not hearken to me’ (Deut.3.25-26 see also Deut.1.37 and 4.21-22).

Moses bears the sin of his people by not entering the promised land; but his people, those who had rebelled, can enter, thanks to Moses taking upon himself their punishment. Although such an account may seem to present God as unforgiving and far from the nonviolent God of Gandhi, the Exodus narrative points to a God who is concerned to see justice established, and Moses, God’s witness, is an example of one who was prepared to die instead of seeing the hurt and death of others. Yet, there is certainly no developed martyrology motivated by the need to transform the antagonist, nor the refusal to commit violence against another, but simply a narrative about one who was prepared to die with or on behalf of his people. If martyrdom was a possibility for Moses, it was connected with the unpopularity of his message that he believed God had called him to deliver.

Also, crucial to the stories of Moses is that he is one who challenges the oppressor, Egypt. He witnesses to Pharaoh God’s word that the Israelites must be set free, and if Egypt continues to persecute the Israelites they too will suffer the consequences of their violence. Barbé notes the structure of the Exodus narrative and its reversal of the classic myth of the mightiest and strongest as the victors: ‘The expelled, the sacrificed, are the sources of new life, a new community, when one would have expected them to

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<sup>9</sup> As this will be shown in chapter 3, especially Deutero-Isaiah.

be simply incriminated and annihilated'.<sup>10</sup> Moses is God's witness to Egypt declaring that Israelite oppression must end. History is viewed here from the perspective of the innocent victim, and God condemns through his servant all who oppress.

b. *Eighth and Seventh Centuries*. The three major prophets and the twelve minor prophets are all representatives of Yahweh, hence the prophet formula:<sup>11</sup>

דבר יהוה אשר היה אל .....

The prophets, like Moses, are depicted as men confronted by God and driven to declare the word of God. Von Rad writes: 'The logical end of the process which here began [i.e. in his call] was martyrdom for the prophet, if Yahweh so willed it'.<sup>12</sup> The OT illustrates von Rad's point regarding the possible consequences of being called to witness to God. Amos, Hosea, Isaiah of Jerusalem and Micah are set apart from their contemporaries and, as von Rad suggests, they would be lonely.<sup>13</sup> There is no evidence in the texts that they were beaten or martyred. It is probable that they suffered as a consequence of their radical application of the law to their generations, their message of justice and peace and their attacks on those who lived by violence (Mic.6.6-18; Is.1.11-17; Amos 5.21-24). The significant time is in the seventh century in which the prophets are seen at work interpreting the earlier prophets and delivering God's word to their contemporaries.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Barbé, (1989) 36.

<sup>11</sup> The phrase occurs 123 times.

<sup>12</sup> Von Rad, (1975) 77.

<sup>13</sup> Von Rad, (1975) 177.

<sup>14</sup> This is a point that von Rad makes, this is a position that has become more popular with the work of those following a more intertextual method for example Childs, Fishbane, Seitz, Larkins et al.

c. *Jeremiah*. Jeremiah's call is dated about 627 CE while he was yet a youth (Jer.1.6) to prophesy that his nation would be destroyed. Von Rad writes: 'The connection between witness-bearing and suffering is of course still closer and more logical in the case of Jeremiah...who is the martyr *par excellence* of the Old Testament'.<sup>15</sup> Jeremiah, like Moses, experienced rejection and the threat of death because of the unpopularity of the message. In a poignant verse Jeremiah compares himself to a powerless lamb:

כבש אֶלֹף יוֹבֵל לטֹבֹחַ (Jer.11.19)

Jeremiah experienced abuse (15.10; 20.1-6), his life was threatened (18.18; 26.11), he endured loneliness (15.17) and was beaten (20.1-2). Seitz suggests, like Moses, Jeremiah must also suffer the same fate. He suffers because of the sins of his generation.<sup>16</sup> On the one hand, he can see the promised world (Jer.3.15-18), on the other, he must die away from the land. Jeremiah is taken to Egypt against his will (43.1-7).<sup>17</sup> Jeremiah experiences the sins of Israel as his own.

Jeremiah's appointment is not just to proclaim to Israel; rather his appointment is to be a 'prophet to the nations' (1.5). Jeremiah witnesses the words of God to his people:

'and if you swear, "As Yahweh lives", in truth, in justice, and in uprightness, then nations shall bless themselves in him and in him shall they glory' (4.2)

Here the well-being of the nations depends on the turning of Israel to God. In addition, Jerusalem is seen as the centre of redemption, a theme that will be seen to occur later:

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<sup>15</sup> Von Rad, (1975) 310; in Bailey, (1998) 253-254, Spieckermann sees the origins of vicarious suffering in the priestly atonement procedures and in the prophets' intercession for the people. The concept of vicariousness was accomplished in the seventh and sixth centuries in the figures of Amos, Jeremiah and Ezekiel with the cult providing the theological framework.

<sup>16</sup> Seitz, (1989) 11.

<sup>17</sup> Seitz, (1989) 12.



‘At that time Jerusalem shall be called the throne of the LORD, and all nations shall gather to it, to the presence of Yahweh in Jerusalem, and they shall no more stubbornly follow their own evil heart’ (Jer.3.17)

Jeremiah’s delivery of God’s message to Israel is not one that would be popular. Israel must cease from their evil ways, they must deal justly with their neighbours, no longer oppress the alien, orphan and widow. They must cease from violence (Jer.7.4-11) and when they so practise the nations will no more follow evil.

d. *Ezekiel*. It is generally accepted that Ezekiel is contemporary with Jeremiah. Like Moses and Jeremiah, Ezekiel receives his call to preach. North expressed surprise regarding the relationship between Ezekiel and the suffering servant of Is.52.13-53.12 that ‘no one had so far conjectured that Ezekiel was the historical original of the servant’.<sup>18</sup> It is indeed surprising as Ezekiel is said to preach to deaf ears and dwell among scorpions (Ezek.2.6) and he is led to expect failure and is enforced to be silent, which Brownlee suggests echoes Is.53.7.<sup>19</sup> However, North was not alone in thinking the similarities between Ezek.4 and Is.52.13-53.12 more than just a superficial coincidence. Von Rad writes about Ezekiel: ‘His very appointment as the responsible watchman resulted in his having to discharge his office at the risk of his own life (Ezek.33.1f)’.<sup>20</sup> It is also said that Ezekiel is to bear the punishment of his people (4.5). Von Rad writes: ‘the office with which the prophet is charged deeply affects the

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<sup>18</sup> North, (1956) 56. In fact he notes such an argument was to be made by Kraetzschmar in a monograph, but he died before he was able to finish the monograph; however, he thought that it would not be a convincing argument, p.192.

<sup>19</sup> Brownlee, (1986) 51.

<sup>20</sup> Von Rad, (1975) 274-275.

sphere of his personal life, and causes him to suffer; and here the suffering is expressly vicarious'.<sup>21</sup> More importantly, von Rad observes the intertextual development with Is. 53 (see section e of this chapter). He writes *vis-à-vis* 4.4-5:

‘One can hardly fail to notice here the presence, in embryo, of thoughts which are later fully developed in Is. LIII, which, too, probably has a prophetic figure in mind . . . The Ezekiel tradition seems to have contributed to the development of the picture of the Servant of Yahweh who takes the guilt of the many upon himself’.<sup>22</sup>

Brownlee has provided a thorough defence of the close relationship between Ezek.3.22-5:17 and the suffering servant of Deutero-Isaiah.<sup>23</sup> He comments that the servant songs of Isaiah must have convinced admirers of Ezekiel that the songs really described Ezekiel.<sup>24</sup> Even if it is possible to play down the vicarious element of Ezek.4.4-4, it is certainly possible to show that the text was read vicariously by later interpreters. For example, the Babylonian Talmud so understood it:

‘God chastised Ezekiel in order to wipe away the sins of Israel’ (b. *Sanh.* 39a)

This Rabbinic understanding illustrates that 4.4-5 was so read by some, which raises the possibility that, if it was not the original intention of the author of chapter 4 the author of Is.52.13-53.12 may have so interpreted this tradition.

Ezekiel too proclaims the testimony of God to his people that condemns his people for their violence against the oppressed. Throughout is seen the message that violence

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<sup>21</sup> Von Rad, (1975) 275.

<sup>22</sup> Von Rad, (1975) 275; Cooke, (1936) 52; Zimmerli, (1949) 117; Reventlow, (1998) 37.

<sup>23</sup> Brownlee, (1986) 51-52.

<sup>24</sup> Brownlee, (1986) 52.

leads to violence, those who plunder will be plundered (Ezek.12.19-20; 22.25, 29), they will bear their own sins (14.10, 14). Ezekiel proclaims a message that God does not wish to destroy the wicked but hopes for their transformation (Ezek.33.11). In 33.20 those who accuse God of being unjust are addressed by God's witness, each will be judged according to the way they live (cf. 2.23, 14.10, 14). Yet there remains the hope of a world that is Eden-like (Ezek.36.35).

e. *The Servant of Deutero-Isaiah*. Is. 40-55 has been dated as early as the rise of Cyrus in 553 BCE and as late as the return of the exiles to Jerusalem. Deutero-Isaiah may have been aware of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Therefore, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, as well as Moses' ministry, may be significant *vis-à-vis* the author's traditions.

In Deutero-Isaiah there is a charge to be witnesses to the nations:

'I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations, to open the eyes that are blind...' (42.6-7 cf. 45.22; 49.6; 55.4; 56.6-7; 60.3, 14; 66.23)

Here is the common idea, in the OT, that all the nations will be blessed because of Israel (cf. Gen.12.1-4; 22.18; 26.4; Jer.3.17; 4.2; Is.2.2-4; 19.24; 25.7-8; Mic.4.1-3; Zeph.3.8-10; 14.16; Ps.2.10-11; 72.17; Mal.1.11).<sup>25</sup> Is.40.1-11 announces that there will be a restoration of Israel's fortunes and Israel will be a witness to the nations that the nations might confess Yahweh. The servant is to bring the nations to salvation through being Yahweh's witness. The servant is called a 'witness' (43.10, 12; 44.8).

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<sup>25</sup> Whybray (1990) 31-32 disputes that this is a significant theme in Deutero-Isaiah, but the consensus still supports von Rad (1977), although when commenting on 49.6 he writes: 'each man in his own way is to act as Yahweh's instrument to bring about the nations' recognition of Yahweh's universal sovereignty' p.139. Gelston, (1992) 377-398 makes a thorough defence of the universalism of Deutero-Isaiah.

The background meaning to the word is that of a witness who has firsthand knowledge of that which he has heard (Lev.5.1), and who must testify (Prov.29.24). The witness function is seen in 43.9-11:

1. כל הגוים נקבצו יחדו ויאספו לאמים
2. מי בהם יגיד זאת וראשנות ישמיעו
3. יתנו עדיהם ויצדקו וישמעו ויאמרו אמת
4. אתם עדי נאם יהוה ועבדי אשר בחרתי
5. למען תעדו ותאמינו לי ותבינו כי אני הוא
6. לפני לא נוצר אל ואחרי לא יהיה
7. אנכי אנכי יהוה ואין מבלעדי מושיע...

The use of the law-court image is quite a popular one in the OT for presenting the ways in which God works (1 Sam.24.15; Ps.9.4; 43.1; 140.12; Lam.3.58; Mic.7.9). Caird comments that the popularity is connected with the fact that only in the law-court did the Israelites experience a systematic quest for truth governed by rules of procedure. Truth was for them something to be discovered and maintained in court.<sup>26</sup> The envisaged setting here is the court in which all the nations and peoples are brought together and questioned regarding **זאת וראשנות**. Israel knows about such things for they have been revealed only to them, but they would not understand and see (6.10; cf. 40.21, 28; 41.27; 43.10; 44.8). In line 3, the nations' witnesses are tested as to whether they speak the truth. In line 4, the move is then to the witness of Yahweh:

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<sup>26</sup> Caird, (1980) 158.

אתם עדי נאם יהוה. In line 5 למען introduces the purpose of the calling of Israel, i.e. to be a servant (line 4): ועבדי אשר בחרתי. However, there is no explanation of the purpose for being a witness. The purpose of being ‘called a servant’ is that ‘you’ (plural) might know and believe in Yahweh. The ‘you’ refers back to אתם on line 4. Yahweh has chosen Israel that Israel might believe so that they may testify to the nations. Similarly, witnesses of the nations were expected to testify (line 3). The sense is, therefore, that the witnesses of Yahweh must also testify to what God has done. The function of the witness is that of litigant. Caird comments that the role of the litigant in the ancient court was not to convince the judge and jury, but to convince the adversary, so placing a finger on his lips (cf. Job 40.4). However, before they can testify, they must know the truth which is the purpose of their calling.<sup>27</sup> Consequently, וישמעו ויאמרו אמת (line 3) is taken with NEB as ‘or let them listen and say: “That is the truth”’. If the witnesses of the nations cannot do as they are asked, then God is telling them to be silent and accept what Yahweh’s witnesses testify. This is said more explicitly:

‘Their witnesses neither see nor know’ (44.9)

However, Israel now sees and must testify.

In the second servant song (49.1-6), the servant is said to have a mouth like a sharp sword (49.2). The synaesthetic comparison indicates the function of a mouthpiece for Yahweh by connecting senses of words that are proper to another, like sharp words.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> See von Rad’s brief discussion, (1977) 249.

<sup>28</sup> Whybray, (1990) 137; Caird, (1980) 146.

In v.6 the servant is one through whom God will bring the nations to salvation:

‘that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth’

The similarities with Jer.1.5 should be observed. Both were chosen by Yahweh before birth and both were understood as prophets to the nations. However, there are differences, and Seitz concludes: ‘The unit is not so much the account of a call as a report of one who had been called, and who is here commissioned for a new task’.<sup>29</sup> This new task is to be God’s witness to the nations. The servant suffers in witnessing (v.4).

In the Third Servant Song (50.4-9), the servant has the disciple’s tongue in order to help the weary with a word (v.4). V.5 suggests the faithfulness of the witness, which results in maltreatment from his enemies presumably as a result of his speaking of God’s word (v.6). However, the servant is confident that he will be vindicated (v.8). Seitz points out that the individual experiences suffering and affliction not unlike that of Jeremiah or of many other figures in Israel’s experience.<sup>30</sup> In other words, suffering and witness are linked.

The Fourth Servant Song (52.13 - 53.12) has been a source of great debate in modern biblical scholarship as well as among ancients since the text does not make clear who is intended by the suffering figure. However, in spite of these problems, there is enough evidence to agree with much of Nickelsburg’s work. For Nickelsburg these verses were crucial for Jews in interpreting their tradition in a way that was

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<sup>29</sup> Seitz, (1996) 234.

<sup>30</sup> Seitz, (1996) 238; von Rad, (1975) 253; Eissfeldt, (1964) 341 writes: ‘the Ebed is . . . the ancestor and representative of the people, endowed with the prophetic title of honour, *servant*, and thus thought of as a prophet. As such, as was indeed the task and fate of the prophets, for example Jeremiah, he has to work upon the people and to suffer for the people’.

relevant during a period of extreme crisis. This is a crucial claim for this thesis. It allowed for 'the exaltation of the persecuted ones and the impending judgement of their persecutors'.<sup>31</sup>

Von Rad suggested a Moses typology: 'Moses is designated the Servant of God, indeed, he stands there as the prophetic prototype'. Later he observes of Moses: 'He too acts as mediator between Jahweh and Israel, he suffers, and raises his voice in complaint to Jahweh, and at last dies vicariously for the sins of his people'.<sup>32</sup> The Exodus themes underlining Deutero-Isaiah also suggest that a Moses-type figure is being presented in Is.53 and that a new Moses and a new Exodus are hoped for.

The servant is rejected and acquainted with grief (53.3). He is said to have been smitten by God, wounded for the sins of Israel (v.4). Moses could not enter the promised land because of the sins of the people (Deut.1.37; 4.21). The exclusion from the land on account of the sins of the people may be alluded to in Is.53.8. In v.7 the servant is compared to a lamb led to the slaughter, again heightening the vulnerable and humble personality of the servant:

נגש ודוּא נענה ולא יפתח פִּי

כִּשֶׁה לטבח יובל וכרחל לפני גזזיה נאלמה

ולא יפתח פִּי

Chavasse sees in these verses an allusion to the rebellion of Israel against Moses (see Num.14.5; 16.22; 16.45; 20.6). However, this is unlikely as also Aaron is in the same position as Moses in Numbers. However, Moses' humility is a characteristic, for

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<sup>31</sup> Nickelsburg, (1972) 81.

<sup>32</sup> Von Rad, (1975) 261; North, (1956) 53-55; Chavasse, (1964) 152-163.

example, when rebuked by Aaron and Miriam (Num.12.3).<sup>33</sup> It is unlikely that Deutero-Isaiah has in mind only the figure of Moses. Arguments can be made for a selection of Israelite heroes for the role of suffering servant.<sup>34</sup>

Underlying the suffering servant can also be seen traditions relating to Jeremiah.<sup>35</sup> The suffering servant is similarly depicted:

כשח לטבח יובל (Is.53.8)      ככבש אלוף יובל לטבח (Jer.11.19)

The same words are used for ‘to slaughter’ טבח, and ‘to lead’ יובל. Although there is a different word for ‘sheep’, the connection of לטבח יובל occurs nowhere else in the OT, thus raising the possibility of an intertextual relationship between Jeremiah and Deutero-Isaiah. However, there is a different context and there can be no certainty. As North writes regarding Jeremiah: ‘although his claims are in some respects attractive, it cannot be said that he suffered uncomplainingly. The most that can be said is that he contributed something to the portrait (liii.7, cf. Jer.xi.19)’.<sup>36</sup> The relevant point for this discussion is to conclude that in the figure of Jeremiah is a tradition of a suffering witness who lived in fear of his life because of the witness he was called to make.

As well as Jeremiah traditions, Brownlee posits traditions relating to Ezekiel underlying suffering servant traditions. He writes:

‘Tentatively, one may propose that Second Isaiah returned from the

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<sup>33</sup> Chavasse, (1964) 155-156.

<sup>34</sup> For a good assessment of the various suggested identities of the suffering servant see North, (1956).

<sup>35</sup> This thesis has a long pedigree. The 10th century Jewish writer, Saadyah Gaon, suggested this connection on the basis of Jer.11.19; also Ibn Ezra who finds Gaon’s proposal attractive. For a summary of more modern approaches see North, (1956) 41.

<sup>36</sup> North, (1956) 192; Reventlow, (1998) 31.




Babylonian Exile, himself leading a new Exodus, and that there he learned of Ezekiel's career from traditions alive on the soil of Palestine. Out of these traditions—together with Second Isaiah's acquaintance with the careers of God's great servants Moses, David, Job, and Jeremiah—the portrait of Yahweh's Servant emerged'.<sup>37</sup>

Whoever was in the mind of the author of these verses, there is an important martyrological text that now needs more attention.

In v.10 the servant is said to have made of himself an offering for sin. In v.12 it is said that he bore the sin of many and made intercession for their transgressions. Here is found a clear idea of vicarious atonement. Identifying the interpretative framework for Deutero-Isaiah's understanding of atonement is complex, but the important point, for the purpose of this chapter, is that sin can be atoned for by another person through intercession, vicarious suffering and death.<sup>38</sup> Cook made the interesting connection between vicarious suffering and the idea of group solidarity.<sup>39</sup> It has been seen that social anthropologists speak of a dyadic personality *vis-à-vis* Mediterranean society (see chapter 2 section 1). The idea of suffering until death rather than forsaking the

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<sup>37</sup> Brownlee, (1986) 52. Brownlee does not consider that Ezekiel traditions might have been preserved in Babylon, this might be a possibility.

<sup>38</sup> Clements, (1998) 51 suggests as much. He believes that the text reflects the experience of defeat and exile. Therefore, without the temple there could be no sin-offering to guarantee the continuance of a holy relationship to Yahweh. Deutero-Isaiah states that God will accept the sufferings of the Servant-Israel, especially the unnamed prophet who becomes the  by which the restored nation will be purified; also Hanson, (1998) 19.

<sup>39</sup> Wheeler Robinson, (1955) 85 quotes S.A. Cook, writes: 'The idea of vicarious atonement...was latent in the ideas of group-solidarity...'

truth claims of his social group would be a response to a challenge made to their honour. Suffering by one would benefit the honour of the group. Suffering for the benefit of social solidarity is a plausible understanding.

The role of the suffering servant as a witness to the nations and those within the tradition who persecute the faithful can be seen. It is said that the nations will see and have understanding on account of the servant, even though they have not been told or seen (52.15).<sup>40</sup> The difficult word יִזֶּה (to sprinkle) (v.15) has caused problems. According to Brownlee the author's intention was to have the many nations being sprinkled for cleansing.<sup>41</sup> נִזָּה (occurs 24 times) signifies a sprinkling of blood, oil or water either with one's finger (Lev.4.6) or a sprinkler (Lev.14.7). The sprinkling was for a cleansing (Lev.4.6; 16.14 cf 1 Pet.1.2; Heb.9.13-14). Brownlee's suggestion may be illustrated in the first-century; Young sees a first century (CE) understanding of Is.52.15 indicating the nations being cleansed. In Acts 8.32-37 Philip reads about the suffering servant and the eunuch wishes to receive baptism, the sprinkling of water (8.37). It is possible that the eunuch wished to receive baptism when he heard, from Philip, that the nations had received something similar in Is.52.15.<sup>42</sup> This fits the context of the servant being a teacher of wisdom to the nations (see discussion below). LXX translates נִזָּה by θαυμάσονται. In this case, the subject of the verb would be the גוֹיִם רַבִּים. Therefore the sense of the reading is that the nations will be in

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<sup>40</sup> Wheeler Robinson, (1955) 83 points out that the nations were impressed by the way he humiliated himself and confronted them in his silent suffering (52.15).

<sup>41</sup> Brownlee, (1964) 208.

<sup>42</sup> Young, (1954) 199-206.

wonder on account of him. Later, the consequence of the servant's mission is stated:

'he [the servant] shall see the fruit of the travail of his soul and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make *many* to be accounted righteous' (53.11).<sup>43</sup>

This reading of 52.15 is in line with the concern of Deutero-Isaiah with the servant being a light to the nations. Waterman observes that the servant is one who through opposition, shame, and fierce persecution stands like a flint, but in view of his consequent humiliation the author promises his future exaltation.<sup>44</sup> Nickelsburg points out that the 'servant is exalted in the presence of kings and the nations'.<sup>45</sup> Similarly, the servant is associated with **יִשְׁכִּיל** (52.13), which suggests one who teaches rather than prospers in this context.<sup>46</sup> 53.6 implies that apostasy is present among the Israelites/nations whom the servant helps through his teaching, ultimately resulting in his suffering and death.<sup>47</sup> Wheeler Robinson suggests that the suffering of the servant, which is also the suffering of the faithful Israel, is the penalty due to the nations. He

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<sup>43</sup> Seitz, (1996) 239, briefly connects 53.11 with 52.15.

<sup>44</sup> Waterman, (1937) 32; Wheeler Robinson, (1955) 84; Watts, (1998) 138.

<sup>45</sup> Nickelsburg, (1972) 24. I think Nickelsburg is right to read 52.13-15 in this way. In chapter 7 section 3 part e I will observe that Rev.11 is strongly influenced by Is.52.13-15. The two witnesses are ashamed before the nations and kings. However, in their faithfulness and instructing they are exalted in the presence of those who had hurt them. It is interesting to read Rev.11 in the light of the servant being exalted before the kings as also were the two witnesses, and those who saw repented.

<sup>46</sup> The *hiphil* of the verb **שָׁכַל** can be used to instruct (Dan.9.22; 1QS 9.19,20; 1QH 7.26). However, it could be objected to as there is no clear object of the verb as in Dan.9.22. Yet, the context of being a light to the nations suggests that the servant has a mission of giving understanding to the nations through his faithfulness to God in spite of suffering and death. Brownlee, (1963) 211 translates v.13: 'Behold, My Servant shall teach wisdom'.

<sup>47</sup> Reventlow, (1998) 29.

writes: 'they [the nations] see that Israel has suffered what the other nations deserved'.<sup>48</sup> From a social anthropological perspective, the servant, seen either as an individual or representative of God's chosen, is not a passive figure as the lamb metaphor figure might suggest, but one whose honour is challenged, one who is labelled a deviant, outside normal behaviour. His humiliation and his silence before his challenger are his active response in that he embraces his label, thus gaining honour in his suffering. Such a model explains why the nations are impressed by him. Those who respond positively with amazement have shame, a positive attribute, in that they behave with respect before the honour of the one they have caused to suffer.

f. *Suffering Servants in Daniel*. Goldingay observes that Daniel is shaped by earlier Scriptures, an example of what he calls 'situational midrash'.<sup>49</sup> This can be seen in terms of the appropriation of suffering servant traditions as well as the influence of Holy War tradition in these stories and visions. Brownlee has observed in the OT a development in Jewish theology from Holy War to martyrdom when he writes: 'to suffer martyrdom is to engage in Holy War'.<sup>50</sup>

In Daniel 3 the narrative relating to Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego resembles a martyr narrative, except that the three heroes do not die. 1) The potential martyr's motive is clear:

'If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and

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<sup>48</sup> Wheeler Robinson, (1955) 85; Is.53.5 is the significant text in illustrating his understanding.

<sup>49</sup> Goldingay, (1987) 284.

<sup>50</sup> Brownlee, (1983) 281-292; Klassen, (1992), 869 has observed hints of a shift from the biblical warrior God in segments of Judaism before Jesus' time. He notes also that LXX translates 'man of war' to 'one who destroys war' (Ex.15.3; Is.42.13; Judith 9.7 and 16.3).

he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known to you O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image which you have set up' (Dan.3.17-18)

The motive is that the heroes will not worship any but Yahweh. There is no indication whether or not they feared death. The heroes act in the knowledge that they might not be delivered. Goldingay writes: 'Death is preferable to apostasy'.<sup>51</sup> There is the idea of Holy War in which the righteous are called upon to fight human wickedness. However, in this case it is not only a physical war but also a spiritual one.<sup>52</sup> 2) The account of the three heroes is a dramatic confrontation with the king and, therefore, fully played out in the public arena. The three are accused by members of the king's court of not obeying a decree issued by the king (3.12). The king is furious and the narrator sets the scene for a confrontation. The king is not impressed by the noble spirits of the three men; yet he offers a way out which amounts to the heroes' apostasy (v.15). In social theory it has been seen that apostasy is the greatest hope of an oppressor (see chapter 2 section 1) in that the three would be dispossessed of honour and become shameless in their own eyes within their community. On the other hand, readiness to die for their beliefs, the *neutralization process*, leads to greater group identity. The Weiners observe: 'One of the paradoxes of martyrdom is that the group is strengthened when individual members die as martyrs'.<sup>53</sup> This is understandable against the social theory of labelling and deviance in which it becomes an honour to have been rejected and condemned by the king or leader.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, the confrontation between the king and the three men is a contest between prevailing truth

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<sup>51</sup> Goldingay, (1987) 74.

<sup>52</sup> Brownlee, (1983) 285.

<sup>53</sup> Weiner, (1990) 62.

<sup>54</sup> Malina & Neyrey, (1991) 109.

and the martyr conviction. Thus, leading the three men to apostasy would validate the accepted truth. If that is not achieved, the martyr has to be killed in order to validate truth the martyr has challenged. The final outcome is that the three men are delivered resulting in Nebuchadnezzar's confession of the true God (v.28), a decree that no one is to speak against Yahweh (v.29) and the promotion of the three heroes (v.30). The three are not only martyr types, but also holy warriors.<sup>55</sup>

Continuing with the martyr theme in Daniel is the appearance of the **משכילים** in Dan.11:

**משכילי עם יבינו לרבים** (11.33)

The **משכילים** will fall and shall receive a little help and by their falling a cleansing will occur (11.35). Some scholars suggest that 11.35 may be the oldest interpretation of the suffering servant in Deutero-Isaiah.<sup>56</sup> It has been seen above that the servant of Deutero-Isaiah is a witness who enlightens others and suffers as a consequence of his testimony. Dan.11.33 depicts the role as: **משכילי עם יבינו לרבים**. The similarities are present:

'he shall see the fruit of the travail of his soul and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous' (Is.53.11)

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<sup>55</sup> Brownlee, (1983) 288.

<sup>56</sup> Ginsberg, (1953) 400-404; Bruce, (1955-56) 176-190; North, (1956) 7, 9.f; Russell, (1960) 138-139; Brownlee, (1964) 211; Nickelsburg, (1972) 24-25; Goldingay, (1987) 284, 303; Collins, (1993) 385; Leske, (1998) 160-161; *pace* Williams, (1975) 112: however, even Williams is prepared to acknowledge that there are terminological parallels with Is.53. His only problem is the so called absence of vicarious suffering being effective for others in Daniel. But this is not so, there is the same aspect in Dan.11.35.

Also, the **משכילים** lead people to understanding (11.35; cf. 12.10):

ומן המשכילים יכשלו לצרוף בהם ולברד וללבן עד עת קץ כי עוד למועד

Death has a cleansing effect in Dan.11.35 (cf.12.10). Who benefits from the death of the wise ones? In order to answer this, **בהם** needs to be observed. Do the **משכילים** die for those who join themselves to them with empty words or is it for themselves? If it is for themselves there is no vicarious suffering present. However, the similarities with Deutero-Isaiah suggest that the **משכילים** suffer for others. Goldingay points out that the 'insincere adherents of v.34b are more plausible for **בהם** than the discerning of v.35a'.<sup>57</sup>

Bruce observes: 'On these maskilim, as on the Isaianic Servant, the brunt of suffering falls because of their faithfulness to Israel's God'.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, Ginsberg proposes that **משכילים** is an allusion to **ישכיל** (Is.52.13).<sup>59</sup> **משכילים** is a derivative of **שכל** 'to understand, prosper'. The word implies a teacher or one who

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<sup>57</sup> Goldingay, (1987) 280; also Nickelsburg, (1972) 24; *pace* Williams; Collins, (1993) 386: Collins objects to the vicarious interpretation due to the fact that the **משכילים** have their effect on the **רבים** by instructing them' and not by dying for them. However, the suffering servant of Is.52.13-53.12 both instructs [**הנה ישכיל עבדי**](52.13) and suffers for others (53.11), so also argued here do the **משכילים** in Dan.11.35; Horsley, (1987) 63-64 discusses the *maskilim* as wise teachers who were being martyred for their faith. He writes: 'The motivation for active and steadfast resistance, besides an unshakeable attachment to the Torah, was the conviction that God was finally about to realize his historical purpose'. Horsley raises the possibility that the *maskilim* were committed to nonviolence, but there is not enough textual evidence to support this as he acknowledges.

<sup>58</sup> Bruce, (1955-1956) 176.

<sup>59</sup> Also Nickelsburg, (1972) 24-25.

instructs (Dan.9.22).<sup>60</sup> Bruce suggests that not only the **משכילים** are modelled on the Isaianic servant but also the Son of Man, who represents the ‘saints of the Most High’ (7.13, 18).<sup>61</sup> However, it is not an obvious connection in terms of language. Yet, there are similarities in theme. The saints, like the servant, are expected to suffer (7.25). Similarly, the saints will be exalted (7.27). However, victory is not achieved by vicarious suffering, which is so distinctive with the suffering servant of 11.35.

g. *The Pierced One* (Zech. 12.10). Zech.12-14 is concerned with events leading to the establishment of God’s universal kingdom in which many from the nations will confess Yahweh and go on pilgrimage to Jerusalem (14.16 cf. Gen.12.1-4; 22.18; 26.4; Jer.3.17; 4.2; Is.2.2-4; Mic.4.1-3; Zeph.3.8-10; 14.16; Ps.2.10-11; 72.17; Ps.Sol.17.30-32; 34-35). A theme associated with the events leading to the final end is the pouring out of the spirit of compassion and supplication (12.10):

ושפכתי על בית דויד ועל יושב ירושלים רוח חן ותחנונים והביטו אלי את  
אשר דקרו וספרו עליו כמספר על היחיד והמר עליו כהמר על הבכור

In the last days the spirit of compassion and supplication will be poured out upon God’s chosen people. The chosen people will be led by the spirit to see the one whom they pierced. There is uncertainty about whom they will see and translators are uncertain whether to accept MT reading **אלי** or a conjectural correction of the text to **אליר**.<sup>62</sup> The result of ‘seeing’ will be that they will lament (**וספרו**) as for a first born

<sup>60</sup> See Nickelsburg, (1972) 24.

<sup>61</sup> Bruce, (1955-1956) 176 and (1960) 65.

<sup>62</sup> NRSV translates the third singular while LXX prefers the MT first person singular suffix as does NEB and NIV. In the latter the pierced one would be the speaker which is God. Therefore, death



child. Some scholars understand that the reference אֲלִיר is to Jewish martyrs killed in war by the nations and that their death in the final battle is the price of Jerusalem's salvation.<sup>63</sup> There is no reason to locate the exact figure in mind in the same way as with the suffering servant.<sup>64</sup> Mitchell is probably right when he suggests that there is no one person in mind, 'but a considerable number of godly persons who have perished by violence'.<sup>65</sup> Moreover, the underlying interpretative framework is Is.52.13-53.12. However, others see Ezek.36.16-23a as significant.<sup>66</sup> The suggestion, therefore, is that 12.10 is an example of vicarious suffering being redemptive for the nation. To what extent does this text suggest this theme? Peterson objects to the connection with Is.52.13-53.12 as he sees two fundamental differences with Zech.12.10. He argues, firstly, that the suffering figure in Is.52.13-53.12 suffers from Yahweh's intents and, secondly, that the suffering has some sort of vicarious effect on the people, whereas in Zech.12.10 people have killed the individual and the effect is

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would not be in the mind of the author which is implausible unless taken as metaphorical (see discussion in Redditt, (1995) 132-133.

<sup>63</sup> Jones, (1962) 161; to some extent Mitchell, (1912) 331; *pace* Petersen, (1995) 121; also against this would be the expectation of אֲלִירָהם and not אֲלִיר, but the singular suffix can have a collective reference, see Waltke, (1990) 113.

<sup>64</sup> Redditt, (1995) 133 comments that it is not possible to establish who is referred to, yet the population of Jerusalem are held responsible for a past deed, perhaps an execution.

<sup>65</sup> Mitchell, (1912) 331.

<sup>66</sup> Mitchell, (1912) 331; Wolff, (1950) 40; Jones, (1962) 161 suggests that concepts are fundamentally the same although there is no similarity of terminology. To some extent: Baldwin, (1972) 194; Zimmerli & Jeremias, (1957) 74; Larkin, (1994) 169; *pace* Tigchelaar, (1996) 126 rejects the connection without any argument; Williams, (1975) 111f: he also rejects terminological influence and suggest that conceptual parallelism is at best open to question with no reasons; Petersen, (1995)

one of lamentation.<sup>67</sup> However, there are clear similarities with the fourth servant song of Isaiah. The servant was wounded (חָלַל); although the verb for ‘pierced’ is דָּקַר, the two are found in synonymous parallelism in Jer.51.4. The second aspect is that those who wounded the martyr figure will lament. There is no obvious lament theme in Is.52.13-53.12. However, it has been the understanding of this chapter that the servant’s suffering was a result of being badly treated (50.6), but those who caused him to suffer would be shocked at their actions (52.15), which would result in the nations being accounted righteous (53.11). Such also is the sense of Zech.12.10 in that those who pierced also come to see their crimes as a result of receiving the spirit of compassion. It is possible that this may be an allusion to the sprinkling in Is.52.15, although one would have expected the use of נָזַח and not שָׁפַךְ. However, this is not to deny that Ezek.36 does provide a background to 12.10. It is the view here that 12.10 probably reflects a conflation of Is.52.13-53.12 and Ezek.36.

Revelation 1.7 drew upon this text in its presentation of Jesus (see also Matt.24.30; John.19.37).<sup>68</sup> Moreover, it is possible that later writers could well make the intertextual connection with Is.52.13-53.12 whether or not the original did, given the similarities of ideas, although there is no certainty of the original relationship between the two.

h. *Suffering Witnesses in the Psalms.* The Psalms functioned liturgically within the temple thus reinforcing the group’s meta-narrative within its tradition. The psalmists

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121.

<sup>67</sup> Petersen, (1995) 121; Reventlow, (1998) 37.

<sup>68</sup> Bauckham, (1993) 319-322; also Sweet, (1981) 112.

were often occupied with the suffering and oppression that Yahweh's people experienced. Consequently, the author of Ps.73 (and Ps.49) engaged in the universal questions of innocent suffering and death - the question of theodicy. Linked to theodicy is the sociological concern, pointed out by Berger, of the psalmist to persuade his community to remain faithful to its own traditions in spite of their apparently powerless situation before the antagonist (see chapter 2 section 1 part e). Discussion of Psalm 73 will illustrate these points.

Psalm 73 declares that God is upright (v.1). However, God's faithful ones are depicted as suffering material poverty (see v.3). Bauckham points out, 'these psalms are preoccupied with the problem of the prosperity of the wicked'.<sup>69</sup> The innocent ones depicted in Psalm 73 also suffer violence and oppression at the hands of the powerful who are presented as unjust and violent while threatening oppression (vv.6-8). The unjust are able to deceive and oppress the poor. This suggests the possibility that apostasy among the psalmist's community was a reality (v.10). Eaton comments that it was easy for the community to adhere to the teaching of the wealthy who speak against God. However, one who stays loyal, as it were washing himself in the true water of purity, and yet has to bear daily suffering, is naturally tempted to think his stand in vain.<sup>70</sup> Maintaining a faithful witness sustains group hope and obedience to tradition:

אם אמרתי אספירה כמו הנה דור בניך בגדתי (v.15)

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<sup>69</sup> Bauckham, (1998) 85.

<sup>70</sup> Eaton, (1967) 185; He also observes Is.49.4; 50.6 and 53.4-5 which also have been observed in this chapter; Weiser, (1962) 510 suggests that 'the crowd eagerly listens to the fashionable spirit of the new age'; Anderson, (1983), vol.2, p.532 writes: 'Probably the wicked in their affluence appeared so impressive that even their evil seemed to be attractive';

The psalmist comments that if he spoke like those who join the wicked he would betray the generation of God's children (דור בניך). What enables the psalmist to avoid renouncing his personal relationship with God is that as Weiser comments: 'the very moment when he is no longer able to see his God, he at least perceives the fellowship of the believers'.<sup>71</sup> If the witness denies God by praising and accepting the powerful (perhaps *challenger* in *challenge-response game theory*), Eaton points out, he betrays not only God, but also the children of God.<sup>72</sup> The psalmist also includes words of encouragement to those who are faithful. There will be a destruction of the oppressor (vv.18-19). Moreover, there is a suggestion of a heavenly bliss beyond earth although it is tentative (vv.23-26).<sup>73</sup> Weiser is more confident when he argues that there is no possibility that the poet sees his sufferings coming to an end in his own life time. Rather he hopes for the consummation of his communion with God after death.<sup>74</sup> Similarly is the hope prominent in Ps.49.15. In this Psalm the poet reflects on the fact that the rich oppressors seem to have a happy lot (cf. Jer.15.13-14; Wis.2). However, he believes that God will ransom the soul from the power of Sheol (v.15 cf. 1 QH 3.20 and chapter 4 section 2 part j). Anderson argues that the verse may allude to deliverance from the present suffering. However, he thinks this is an unlikely context,

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<sup>71</sup> Weiser, (1962) 511.

<sup>72</sup> Eaton, (1967) 185.

<sup>73</sup> Anderson, (1983) v.2, p.535 suggests that Ps.73 represents a tentative venture to go beyond the current beliefs that the after life characterized a shadowy Sheol existence to the possibility of a heavenly bliss. Certainly in the case of Ps.73 the connection is tentative but is significant in that there is a push towards understanding innocent suffering; also Rowley, (1955) 175; *pace* Westermann, (1989) 141-142 who makes the surprisingly confident assertion that there is no question of a bodily resurrection without qualifying his statements.

when observing that Sheol is the ultimate goal for both wicked and righteous. Therefore, deliverance is that the righteous would not see Sheol but would be raised to life again to enjoy fellowship with God.<sup>75</sup> Weiser comments that the poet expresses a confidence that at death God will take care of the righteous and will 'not abandon him to the power of the underworld'.<sup>76</sup>

## *2. Summary of Findings*

Moses is not a martyr figure, but he provides an example of one who was faithful to God, and suffered because he faithfully spoke God's word to Israel. Prominent in the Moses stories is the conflict with Egypt and with his own people. The worldview of the Moses narrative is antagonistic to the values of the powerful nation and all that it represents. However, nonviolence does not run through the stories, although Barbé notes that there are some nonviolent aspects in the narrative. Liberation, for example, he notes does not come through Moses killing the Egyptian guard (Ex.2.14), which simply resulted in the process of liberation being delayed. He writes of the story: 'Genuine liberation occurs when agitation and disturbance become so annoying that the dominant society itself is led to rid itself of the trouble-makers, expel those who claim their freedom'.<sup>77</sup>

In the figure of Jeremiah is one who is opposed and oppressed because he gave his faithful testimony against oppression and violence. Connected with Jeremiah is his

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<sup>74</sup> Weiser, (1962) 514; Rowley, (1955) 175

<sup>75</sup> Anderson, (1983), vol.1, p.379.

<sup>76</sup> Weiser, (1962) 390; Rowley, (1956) 171; Caird, (1980) 245.

<sup>77</sup> Barbé, (1989).35.

hope for the transformation of the nations from their violent ways, but this is conditional on Israel practising justice. Jeremiah suffered the consequences of Israel's sin; he felt their oppression as his own. In Jeremiah is found tradition regarding suffering and faithful witnesses from which later readers of the Jeremiah narratives would draw.

Ezekiel also proclaims God's message against the oppressor. Although the emphasis is much more on the religious crimes of Israel than, for example, in Amos, the message is still challenging the violent oppressors to repent. His message is that God wants transformation; he does not seek their destruction. His role as God's witness results in his suffering, and, like Moses and Jeremiah, he experiences Israel's sin as his own.

Is.52.13-53:12 provides evidence of martyr ideas resulting from witnessing for God to his people and the nations, and through martyrdom the nations are brought to some acknowledgement of God. In this text is seen the clearest challenge to the myth that strength and power conquer and that the enemy must be eradicated. In this text is an example of weakness and innocence conquering, not in the slaughter of the antagonist, but in the transformation of the antagonist through suffering.

In the Book of Daniel three young men witness their faithfulness to Yahweh in spite of the threat of death. The narrative satisfies most of the components of an ideal martyrology. This provides an example of the importance of maintaining one's own witness against the nations.<sup>78</sup> Moreover, the delivery of the three men strengthens group identity and falsifies the accepted state truth, presumably one based on

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<sup>78</sup> Nickelsburg, (1972) 55 and 95: he writes concerning Dan.3 and 6 that both chapters were intended to inculcate steadfastness in the Antiochan persecution.

oppression and the threat of violence. In Daniel is presented a more developed picture of suffering witness resulting in victory. The witness is for the community of Israel and to the nations (6.25-27).

In Ps.73, there are conceptual parallels with the suffering servant of Isaiah, although there are no lexicographical parallels. Even though there will be suffering and failure, his portion will be with God forever (73.26; cf. Is. 53.12; 4 Macc.18.3 et al). The idea of resurrection in the Psalms, especially Ps.73, is associated with the question of theodicy in which the righteous may expect to die for their beliefs. The form of the life beyond death is unclear in the Psalm, but it is present and is associated with the question of theodicy. Moreover, the Psalmist is expressing a hope that the righteous will have an eternal relationship with God. Missing in the Psalm is the idea of vicarious suffering. This is an encouraging text in which the redemption of the innocent and powerless is a real hope, even for those powerless individuals who have died. It is not a classic martyrological narrative, but it presents key components that would form a martyrological context and conceptually might be inter-textually connected with other texts in John's mind.

### *3. Conclusions*

The OT provides evidence of those who as God's witnesses:

1. proclaimed God's word to all opposed to God.
2. suffered.
3. showed total willingness to die for their beliefs.
4. took upon themselves another's suffering or death.
5. had an impact on the antagonist as well as on their own community. The pivotal

values of shame and honour elucidate this inasmuch as through readiness to die, a potential martyr gains honour and reinforces the truth claims of the community. In failing to be ready to die for one's beliefs one becomes a shameful person - thus reinforcing *social control theory*.

6. will be justified by God.
7. benefit their own people, such testimony is also for the benefit of the nations.

These seven points are key ideas attached to faithful witnesses. It will be important to see to what extent these ideas reappear and develop in later Jewish thought in the next chapter as well as in Revelation. In comparing with the Gandhian thinking, the first six components would be present in Gandhi's thought although the nonviolence would be a more dominating theme. Yet there is in the above the idea that nonviolence and weakness will transform the antagonist.



FAITHFUL WITNESSES IN LATER JEWISH TRADITION

1. *The Social Background to Later Jewish Tradition*

The development of martyr ideas within Judaism is associated with the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes from 175 BCE; the ruthless and inept handling of Judea by Roman procurators leading up to 66 CE; the destruction of the temple in 70 CE; and the suppression of the Bar Kochba revolt in 132 CE. Without dispute, these events were important for the development of a Jewish martyrology in the later years. Frend, however, observes the importance of the OT: 'The early history of the Jews, as preserved in traditions enshrined in the earlier books of the OT told of a long struggle against the odds, and an even greater one to maintain religious cohesion'.<sup>1</sup> John, it has been argued, did not simply draw upon traditions that had developed since the period of Antiochus IV but also drew upon the OT itself. John was concerned to present his community in continuity with the OT figures in order to maintain his own community's religious cohesion and identity as a people who had suffered under Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia and hellenistic empires, as well as their own rulers. As the author of Daniel intended to depict the events and reign of Antiochus in continuity with the previous imperial rulers, it is likely that John read Dan.10-12 in continuity with the struggles with Egypt, Assyria and Babylon. Consequently, John would draw upon his tradition in order to present his community's situation in continuity with the situation of those who had suffered and died for their faith seen throughout the OT. Trites writes: 'Just as it was the destiny of the OT prophets to experience persecution, so

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<sup>1</sup> Frend, (1965) 31.

also is the lot of the prophetic witness of Jesus'.<sup>2</sup>

*Assimilation, Acculturation, and Accommodation.* The paradigm for measuring deviancy among Jewish communities on the principle that Palestinian Judaism is the orthodox norm, has been rightly challenged; Hengel has shown that Jews, either from *diaspora* or Palestine, were by no means immune from Hellenization.<sup>3</sup> Barclay observes three important components which facilitate understanding the possible relationship that a Jew might have with the more dominant Graeco-Roman ideas and thus help us to understand what is meant by the label 'deviant'.<sup>4</sup> The first is *assimilation* which is the greatest threat to the social boundaries of any ethnic group - those who assimilate would rightly be labelled, from their own group's perspective, 'deviant' - a shameless person. The second is *acculturation* which will be explored below to show the levels to which some Jewish literature has acculturated itself to the alien culture *vis-à-vis* language and education.<sup>5</sup> In this case, the acculturized group may consider themselves Jews, but such an appellation may be denied by others within the Jewish tradition who are strongly antagonistic to Graeco-Roman ideas and way of life. The third component is *accommodation*, i.e. the use to which *acculturation* is put.<sup>6</sup> Barclay observes three levels of *accommodation*: (1) submersion of Jewish cultural uniqueness; (2) reinterpretation of Judaism preserving some uniqueness;

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<sup>2</sup> Trites, (1977) 160.

<sup>3</sup> Hengel, (1974); also a point made by Barclay, (1996) 82-88, 101.

<sup>4</sup> Barclay, (1996) 92.

<sup>5</sup> Barclay, (1996) 95.

<sup>6</sup> Barclay, (1996) 96.

(3) antagonism to Graeco-Roman culture.<sup>7</sup> In (3) those involved in acculturation might use Graeco-Roman ideas for the defence and development of their own ideas. On the whole, it is erroneous to speak, from a modern perspective, regarding who is a Jew and who is a deviant. A Jew might be at various stages of the above components. Barclay writes: 'A Jew who was assimilated to the extent of attending a Greek school and visiting the Greek theatre might be considered by some Jews as "apostate" but fully accepted as an observant Jew by others'.<sup>8</sup> The concern here is to identify material close in time to John, texts which can be broadly categorized as antagonistic to Graeco-Roman culture, ideas that were popular and rooted in biblical tradition explored in chapter 3. This will facilitate understanding the Jewish intellectual responses antagonistic to Hellenism.

## 2. *Witnesses who Suffer*

### a. *Abel*

*NT.* Biblical tradition does not present Abel as a faithful prophet. Moreover, there is no hint that his death resulted from his role as a faithful witness and no element of vicarious suffering. Yet, there is a relevant martyrological development of the narrative for this discussion in the Palestinian Targums. The Weiners call such figures 'fabricated martyrs',<sup>9</sup> but this may not be a helpful term as it suggests dishonesty or fraud on the part of the author. This can be seen in the case of Abel in which by the

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<sup>7</sup> Barclay, (1996) 97.

<sup>8</sup> Barclay, (1995) 118.

<sup>9</sup> Weiner, (1990) 12.

first century Abel is referred to as a martyr-prophet.<sup>10</sup> Jesus, for example, placed Abel at the beginning of the line of martyred righteous prophets (Lk.11.50-51; par. Matt.23.35); Jesus in Matthew, presented the Pharisees and scribes as *antitypes* of Cain who killed Abel (23.35 cf. 1 John 3.12; Jude 11). Elsewhere in the NT Abel is presented as a faithful witness who acted in righteousness (Heb.11.4), and in Heb.12.24 Abel's act is a *antitype* of Jesus' act in such a way to develop the understanding of Jesus' death. McNamara suggests that such traditions are either developments of the NT writers themselves or of later Jewish tradition.<sup>11</sup>

*4 Maccabees 18.11.* Interest in Abel as a faithful witness can be found in 4 Maccabees 18.11, a text that reflects Greek forms of writing, but whose ideas cohere with OT tradition. It is reported that the father of the seven young martyrs read the account of Abel, slain by Cain, to his sons. The context is that of drawing upon exemplary behaviour of old, and it would appear that Abel served such a function. Indeed, Hadas comments that Abel is added to give hope to those who are about to die for their witness.<sup>12</sup>

*Targum Tradition.* McNamara writes of the presentation of Abel in the targums (except Onkolos): 'we find Abel considered as a martyr who died for the point of doctrine denied by Cain'.<sup>13</sup> This development should be seen against the wider social

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<sup>10</sup> McNamara, (1966) 158; Vermes, (1975) 116; Pobee, (1985) 28

<sup>11</sup> McNamara, (1966) 157.

<sup>12</sup> Hadas, (1953) 241.

<sup>13</sup> McNamara, (1966) 158.

setting of needing to develop heroes of the faith, even to the extent of developing narrative martyrologically, narrative that has no foundation in the earliest traditions. The following text is crucial:

‘Cain answered to Abel: “Therefore your offering was accepted with delight, but my offering was not accepted with delight”. Abel answered: “The world was created by love and is governed according to the fruit of good deeds. Because the fruit of my deeds was better than yours and more prompt than yours, my offering was accepted with delight”. Cain answered and said to Abel: “There is no Judgement, and there is no other world, there is no gift of good reward for the just and no punishment for the wicked”. Abel answered and said to Cain: “There is Judgement, there is a Judge, there is another world. There is the gift of good reward for the just and punishment for the wicked”. On account of these things they were quarrelling in the field and Cain arose against Abel his brother and drove a stone into his forehead. The Lord said to Cain: “Where is Abel your brother?” He said: “I know not. Am I my brother’s keeper?” He said: “What have you done? The voice of the blood(s) of your brother which was swallowed up by the ground cries before me from out of the earth. Now because you have killed him, you are cursed by the earth . . .”’ (*Ps. Jon.* 4.8-11, tr. Vermes; cf. *Jos. Ant.* 1.2.1 or 1.52-56)

Abel is depicted as one who witnesses to God’s goodness in a conflict with Cain. McNamara describes his presentation here ‘as a confessor of the faith’.<sup>14</sup> Cain denies that God acts with justice or love and claims rather that he acts with no logic. Resulting from this confrontation is Abel’s death,<sup>15</sup> Cain acts cynically because he has no fear of retribution (cf. *Wis.* 1.13; 2.1):<sup>16</sup>

‘There is no gift of good reward for the just and no punishment for the wicked’.

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<sup>14</sup> McNamara, (1966) 157.

<sup>15</sup> Isenberg, (1970) 435: the reason for the murder is the argument about reward and punishment, A Day of Judgement, and the World to Come.

<sup>16</sup> Wisdom of Solomon will receive more discussion in part g of this section.

However, Abel's blood calls out for justice (4.10 cf. Jub.4.3).<sup>17</sup> Consequently, Cain is punished and Abel is vindicated by God in the punishment of Cain and presumably Abel takes his place in the other world.

Is the tradition about Abel witnessing that there is a judge, impartial judgement and another world datable to first century CE? Vermes claims that Abel and Cain were perceived as prototypes of the just teacher and martyr on the one hand, and the first heretic and arch-sinner on the other in the first century CE.<sup>18</sup> As has been seen there is evidence for this understanding of Cain and Abel in texts datable to the first century CE which supports Vermes' claim. In Matthew and Luke, Abel is a prophet and like many other prophets was killed because of the testimony he gave (Matt.23.34-35 par. Lk.11.49-50). Matthew emphasises that Abel was innocent (23.35b). Bauckham cautiously suggests that Jude had in mind the Targum tradition.<sup>19</sup> It is likely that the gospel writers drew upon Jewish tradition that presented Abel as a faithful witness.<sup>20</sup> McNamara in arguing for an early date to the Targum tradition notes that Heb.11.4 is closer to the Targum tradition than to Josephus' discussion of Abel. He comments that Heb.11.4 depicts Abel as a confessor of the faith.<sup>21</sup> If this is the case, to be a faithful witness there must have been some underlying tradition that was known regarding a testimony that he gave. This might have been the case with 4 Maccabees 18.13. Abel's

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<sup>17</sup> To be discussed below, this is a feature that is seen in Rev.6.10; cf. 19.2 and will be discussed in a further chapter dealing with Revelation.

<sup>18</sup> Vermes, (1975) 116.

<sup>19</sup> Bauckham, (1990) 79-80; also Grelot, (1959) 59-88; Isenberg, (1970) 433-444 argues that the tradition reflects anti-Sadducee polemic.

<sup>20</sup> Le Déaut, (1963) 35ff argues to interpret the NT passages in the light of the Palestinian Targums.

<sup>21</sup> McNamara, (1966) 159.

name is invoked for encouragement to the seven brothers, there surely was a tradition as seen in the Targum depicting Abel's death resulting from his witness to God. However, Heb.11.4 adds little to Gen.4 and it does not resemble the Targums; so also with 4 Maccabees 18.13. Josephus' account, on the contrary, is closer to the Targums and certainly illustrates a development of the Abel figure early enough to suggest that the Targums reveal first century tradition:

‘for Abel, the younger, was a lover of righteousness, and, believing that God was present at all his actions, he excelled in virtue’ (Josephus, *Ant.* 1.52-53)

Here Abel has a belief in God who is present in all things and that God guided him in the way of righteousness.

Similarly Matthew is evidence that Targum tradition was first-century. He understood Jesus and his disciples to be in line with the prophets. McKay writes: ‘In Matthew and Luke, Abel represents the first of a series of prophets - sent by God - whose blood was shed by hostile groups (Matt.23.35; Lk. 11.51)’.<sup>22</sup> In Matthew, Jesus' disciples proclaimed the Kingdom of God, and the judgement that will come if there is not a transformation of the person from violence; in proclaiming this message, like the prophets, they should be willing to suffer and die for such a message (10.7-24). In Matt.5.22 there will be judgement not only for those who kill, but also those who are angry with their neighbours. In 10.15, Jesus declares to his disciples that whoever rejects their message will be judged and punished. This theme reappears in 11.22 in reference, again, to those who reject prophecy. The prophetic figure, John the Baptist, attacks those who are a ‘brood of vipers (3.7-10). John proclaims that they must bear

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<sup>22</sup> McKay, (1996) 84, 90 on p.90: writes: ‘Isaac and Abel call to mind the sacrifice of a beloved innocent’.

better fruit. There may be an allusion to Cain tradition here. Like Cain, the offering of the Pharisees was not pleasing. Those who reject the message will be condemned. The parallel with Matt.23.33 also strengthens this point. Jesus like John the Baptist attacks the Pharisees telling them that there is a judgement for them. Here it is said that they are like Cain who killed Abel (23.35). Again this is connected with the Cain and Abel story in the Targums. For Matthew, the Pharisees and Sadducees are evil. It is plausible that Matthew presents these groups as having no belief in judgement or justice, and that is why they are able to kill so easily. They have no understanding that their own violence will visit them.

In sum, in the Targum tradition, Abel acted in accordance with his beliefs, and those who heard this story in the synagogue would be encouraged to testify to Yahweh. Abel would be worthy of imitation, thus strengthening group identity and conviction (*theory of social control*). In terms of the theory of cultural heritage, social theorists of this type emphasise the potential for incorporating ideas into the heritage and this has been seen in terms of Abel.

#### *What does Abel's Death Achieve?*

Matthew writes:

‘that upon you [the scribes and Pharisees] may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of Abel ’ (Matt. 23.35 cf. Lk. 11.51)

The author of Hebrews writes:

‘And to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks more graciously than the blood of Abel’ (12.24)

Caird writes: ‘The blood of Jesus “speaks better things than the blood of Abel”



precisely because it cries from the ground for mercy, not retribution'.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, Brownlee writes: 'Instead of pleading for vengeance like the blood of Abel or that of the Maccabean martyrs, His [Jesus'] blood pleads only for forgiveness and redemption'.<sup>24</sup> This portrayal of Abel is illustrated in *Jubilees* in which the blood of Abel cries out from the ground to heaven making accusation against Cain (4.3). In chapter 4.31-32 the punishment is described:

'And he was killed by its stones because he killed Abel with a stone . . . Therefore it is ordained in the heavenly tablet: "With the weapons with which a man kills his fellow he shall be killed "' (4.31-32)<sup>25</sup>

The punishment suggests the idea that those who live by violence will die by violence (cf. Rev.13.10). Clearly God is in control, and the punishment is carried out in response to those who cry out for justice. Yet, for *Jubilees*, the idea that violence leads to violence is clearly in the mind of the author.

In both Gen.4.10 and later developments justice is seen to be established. This involves revenge against Cain. Consequently, Abel's testimony is justified and God is seen to act with justice. The idea of the blood of the martyrs calling on God to avenge their death can also be seen in Deut. 32.43, 2 Kings 9.7, Joel 3.21.<sup>26</sup> Also, Q (Matt. 23.35; Lk. 11.51) teaches that the wicked in every generation, like Cain, should also expect the blood of their innocent victims to be the cause of their deaths. Pobee adds:

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<sup>23</sup> Caird, (1984) 85; Harrington, (1993) 94 suggests that Heb.12.24 challenges ideas of vengeance.

<sup>24</sup> Brownlee, (1983) 290.

<sup>25</sup> In a text from the fourth century CE, Paul meets Abel with some other known martyr figures (*Apoc. of Paul* 51).

<sup>26</sup> Also Downing, (1963) 183 suggests that 2 Macc. 8.3 is a clear allusion to the story of Cain and Abel.

‘the blood of the martyrs always cried for vengeance because such acts of wanton pain and bloodshed were in fact perpetrated against God himself (2 Macc.8.3-4)’.<sup>27</sup> More precisely, directed against the very principles of mercy and compassion which are central to God and his creation.

However, it is important to reflect on the nature of the love of God to which Abel testifies. It is not difficult to see that a tension could exist between justice and love (cf. *Gen. R.* 6:1, 3). Vermes adds that such a tension might lead ‘Jewish theology into the trap of rigorous determinism’.<sup>28</sup> This is understandable if the emphasis is placed continually on God to act according to the rules that he has set. Vermes points out that God’s love was believed to be more easily aroused than His justice.<sup>29</sup> This is illustrated in the slowness of God to act in destroying Cain. Moreover, whereas the wicked provoke God to justice, there can be seen the development of the idea that the righteous excite his love (cf *Gen. R.* 33.3; 73.3). This ultimately leads to the idea that the righteous person can be a ransom for the wicked (Philo *De Sacrificiis Abelis et Cain* 121). In this way, as for example in Hebrew 12.24, Jesus’ death is emphasised as being a blessing in that his readiness to die has a transforming impact on the antagonists, whereas in the case of Abel, the emphasis is more on the vengeance to which the innocent hope. This resembles the two aspects of martyrs within the nonviolent tradition: those who see their deaths as bringing God’s vengeance upon the antagonist, and the Gandhian type innocent death in which the martyrdom it is hoped

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<sup>27</sup> Pobe, (1985) 41.

<sup>28</sup> Vermes, (1975) 125.

<sup>29</sup> His point is strengthened by texts from the OT, for example: ‘For his anger is but for a moment, and his favour is for a lifetime’ (Ps.30.5a).

will bring about the transformation of the antagonist. Yet, still in the Gandhian type, as perhaps reflected in Hebrew 12.24, the vengeance theme although not emphasised, must surely be present in the idea that violence will lead to violence (cf. Jub.4). If the martyr's death does not have the transforming impact on the antagonist, the antagonist will die a violent death. The martyr can be said to be the cause of the death of the antagonist. If they refuse the martyr's testimony, the testimony becomes the judgement (cf. Matt. 23.35; Lk. 11.51).

b. *Pseudo-Philo 6 and 38*

This text originated in Palestine either not long before or just after 70CE. It is concerned to find exemplary martyr-type figures who were redeemed. Chapter 38 is a *haggadah* on Judg.10.3-6. Judg.10.3-6 reports the reign of the judge Jair and that during his reign Israel did evil (v.6). However, the story is considerably paraphrased in LAB.38. It is reported that Jair forced the people by threat of death to sacrifice to Baal (v.1). However, the seven men tell Jair that they are not willing to sacrifice to Baal for the sake of tradition (v.2). They use the words of the faithful judge Deborah who stressed the importance of keeping God's law (v.3). Jair had his servants take them to the fire in order to burn them. However, instead of the fire consuming the seven faithful men, the servants were burned and when Jair also came to the spot he was consumed. Before his death the angel of the LORD tells Jair why he is to be consumed: because he led his people away from the covenant of God. He is told that those seven men whom he tried to have consumed will live with a living fire and are free (v.4) (The text bears similarities with LAB.6, Dan.3, 6 and 2 Macc.7).<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Murphy, (1993) 161.

The heightening of the figure of Isaac in LAB 18.5, 32.1-4 and 40.2 who was also willing to go to the fire connects with chapter 38. The focus of the text is on vengeance and the redemption of the seven men. There are no hints of immortality but simply the rescue from the fire. Although the seven figures are clearly parallel to those of the actual martyrs in 2 Macc.7, for the author here the method and motivation for writing is different in that he is documenting legend and not a happening that was closely remembered in which the figures died. The author intertextually re-presents an ancient story influenced by Dan.3 and 6 in order to encourage his community to stay firm against assimilation or even acculturation into the hellenized world. It is possible that the martyrdom of the seven brothers in 2 Macc.7 was in the mind of the author and that he alludes to it intertextually thus altering the outcome. However, he does so in chapter 6 in which there are not seven men, but only Abram thus suggesting that Pseudo-Philo is not conscious of 2 Macc.7 in chapter 38. Murphy has shown they have the same elements and that Dan.3 is the probable background and 2 Macc.7 is unlikely to have influenced the writing of LAB. 6 and 38.<sup>31</sup>

The seven martyr types are not representative of a Gandhian type martyr. Their actions are motivated on the basis of a refusal to compromise and not with a concern to see the transformation of the antagonist Jair. They do not act vicariously for the

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<sup>31</sup> Murphy, (1993) 161. He observes seven elements that the two narratives have in common with Dan.3: 1) Someone reports to a leader about those who disobey the leader's commands; 2) the leader interrogates the offenders; 3) the offenders stand firm in their position and demonstrate awareness of the terrible punishment awaiting them; 4) the leader angrily passes sentence; 5) the sentence is carried out; 6) some of those who carry out the sentence are killed by the very punishment meant to consume their victims; 7) the victims are miraculously saved.

antagonist, and the just God of Abel in Jub.4 is seen more than the loving God of Heb.12.24.

*c. Isaac*

The significance of the Aqedah for NT studies has been mitigated by Davies and Chilton,<sup>32</sup> but their argument is unpersuasive regarding the tradition of martyrdom being too late for NT application. Hayward has presented a firm rebuttal,<sup>33</sup> and Vermes recently provided new documentary evidence from Qumran in 4Q225 for the early dating he had previously argued.<sup>34</sup>

*Isaac in MT Gen. 22.*

Abraham was told to offer Isaac as a burnt-offering upon a mountain in the land of Moriah (v.2). The emphasis is on the temptation of Abraham to disobey, especially in the fact that the narrator points out regularly that Isaac was his only son. Isaac's only words in the narrative are to ask his father where is the lamb of burnt-offering (v.8) suggesting that Abraham had not told Isaac that he was to be the sacrifice. The age of Isaac is not given. The description of him as נער gives no clues as it affords a wide range of usage including young man, child, babe and servant. The servants who accompany Abraham and Isaac are called נער. Certainly Isaac is not a babe in that he speaks and carries the wood. Abraham obeys God and as a result it is declared to

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<sup>32</sup> Davies & Chilton, (1978) 514-546.

<sup>33</sup> Hayward, (1981) 127-150.

<sup>34</sup> Vermes, (1996) 140-145; see VanderKam, (1997) 241-261 for a fuller treatment of 4Q225 and its relationship with Jubilees.

Abraham that all the nations will be blessed because of his obedience.

### *Isaac in Later Jewish Literature.*

The following distinctive elements are of particular importance *vis-à-vis* Isaac being a faithful witness:<sup>35</sup> (1) Isaac was informed of his role as a victim. (2) Isaac gave his consent and asked to be bound. (3) God would remember the binding of Isaac in favour of his descendants. (4) The Aqedah was associated with the site of the Temple in Jewish tradition. (5) It was a source of inspiration and instruction. (6) It was associated with vicarious expiation. (7) Sacrifice was completed.

A few comments are needed regarding these seven elements *vis-à-vis* martyrdom. The fourth element is important in that, if the daily offering of the lamb (*Tamid*) on a daily basis was connected with Isaac, then the removal of sins was associated with Isaac's obedience. This discussion will observe the later texts not primarily against the texts' *Sitz im Leben*, but rather as a development of the writers' and readers' oral and written tradition motivated by the need to respond to the social setting. Sources relevant for this study *vis-à-vis* the aqedah are: Jubilees; 4Q225; Pseudo-Philo; 4 Maccabees; Josephus; the Palestinian Targums.<sup>36</sup>

### *Jubilees 17.15-18.19.*

The text develops Gen.22 in a way reminiscent of Job 1 with a discussion occurring

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<sup>35</sup> See Daly, (1977) 61; Swetman, (1981) 76-80 and Vermes, (1996) 143-144.

<sup>36</sup> Philo does not feature in this discussion. Barclay, (1996) 159 placing Philo very much as a Jew, but highly acculturated. Philo's discussion of Isaac is Alexandrian which placed great emphasis on inner disposition of the worshipper as being decisive for the validity of a sacrifice.

between Prince Mastema and God as to Abraham's faithfulness.<sup>37</sup> The discussion occurs on Nisan 12 which has led some commentators to link the offering with that of the Passover sacrifice, but there are problems with this although the weight of evidence suggests a clear connection between the passover and the offering of Isaac.<sup>38</sup> VanderKam strengthens the connection and argues that the Aqedah is intimately connected with the sequence of events that constituted the Exodus from Egypt. Prince Mastema he notes appears only in two contexts in Jubilees, the binding of Isaac (17.16; 18.9, 12) and in trying to kill Moses and spare the Egyptians (48.2, 9, 12, 15).<sup>39</sup> Jubilees' report that the place of the offering of Isaac was on Mount Zion, the place of the temple (18.13) argues for the Aqedah possibly being connected with the daily temple sacrifices (*tamid*).<sup>40</sup> Yet, also the Passover was sacrificed in the Temple, and as Jubilees is concerned with the Passover, the Passover sacrifice is in the mind of the author. However, there is no heightening of Isaac's role and nothing in the text

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<sup>37</sup> VanderKam, (1997) 260.

<sup>38</sup> Davies and Chilton have argued against the connection: 1) the connection is based on the coincidence of dating (p.519); 2) Jubilees connects major festivals with the Patriarchs. Segal, (1996) 106, points out that this should not 'override the obvious fact that a significant connection between passover and the sacrifice of Isaac has been made'. Moreover, they do not adequately respond to Le Déaut who compares the festival in 49.22 with that of 18.18 (p.181). Moreover, Sabourin points out 49.15 as significant for considering the Passover as a memorial of the sacrifice and liberation of Isaac (p.265); VanderKam, (1997) 245-248 strengthens Le Déaut's argument that the sacrifice occurred on the first day of unleavened bread.

<sup>39</sup> VanderKam, (1997) 248, 260.

<sup>40</sup> This is a position maintained by many scholars. Swetnam, (1981) 38, writes: 'In view of the author's etiological tendencies, this identification is probably to be regarded as a deliberate attempt to link the Temple sacrifices with the Akedah'. This was not a difficult link to make as the author of Jubilees would know of the placing of the temple on Mount Moriah (2 Chron. 3.1).

would encourage Jews during difficult times.

4Q225.

Again Mastemah is the prime mover in seeking the destruction of Isaac through having a wager with God as to Abraham's faithfulness (Frag.2.Col.1.9-10, cf. Jub above). In Frag.2 col. II.4 Isaac appears to make a speech to his father, unfortunately only כ is present in the manuscript. However, Vermes *et al.* observe that there is enough space for another 15 letters. It is suggested by the editors that the speech resembles either *Gen.R.56.7* or the targum tradition which all begin with a *kaph*.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, the reading is that Isaac asks his father to bind his hands.<sup>42</sup> In II.8 is found: ימצא כחש. The most likely subject of ימצא is Isaac: 'whether Isaac will be found weak'. Mastemah is keen to see if Isaac will be found weak. In Frag.II line 10 Isaac is blessed and not Abraham as in *Gen.22.17*. It can be concluded with certainty that 4Q225 heightens Isaac's role in the Aqedah and testifies to a pre-Christian dating for this aspect of the Aqedah.

*LAB 18.5; 32.1-4 and 40.2.*

Isaac knows his father intends to offer him as the burnt-offering (32.2), and agrees *in toto* to be offered (v.3). Isaac considers that future peoples will be instructed and remember that Yahweh has made the soul of a man worthy to be a sacrifice (v.3).

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<sup>41</sup> Vermes, (1996) 142.

<sup>42</sup> All the Targums begin with the imperative: כפוט את ידי 'bind my hands' (see Vermes, [1996] 142).



Connected with this is the presentation of Isaac as one worthy of imitation. This is illustrated in the sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter; when facing death she draws upon Isaac's faithfulness and obedience to God for inspiration in facing her death (40.2).<sup>43</sup> Daly believes that Pseudo-Philo 32.4 indicates that the sacrifice was actually carried out.<sup>44</sup> Finally, Isaac's words to Abraham suggest that he considered his death as vicarious thus atoning for the wicked deeds of men similarly to that of the lamb (32.3).

#### *4 Maccabees (7.14; 13.12; 16.20; 18.11)*

Isaac is portrayed as a model for the Jewish martyrs (13.12).<sup>45</sup> Moreover, Isaac's role in the drama is heightened by his complete willingness to die (16.20). An expiatory and intercessory function is linked to Isaac on the basis that such a function is explicitly attributed to the suffering of the martyrs (17.22, cf. 1.11; 6.29; 18.4). However, the expiatory function is not explicitly attributed directly to Isaac here or in any of the above texts. Segal argues that because Isaac's blood was not spilt so he could not be considered in the same light as those who were actually martyred.<sup>46</sup> Nevertheless, in 13.12 Isaac is understood as one who became as a sacrifice and Isaac is one of those

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<sup>43</sup> Swetman, (1981) 56 observes that the aqedah in Pseudo-Philo provided 'an example of the proper attitude on the face of death.

<sup>44</sup> Daly, (1977) 61. The Latin: 'et cum obtulisset pater filium in aram'. *Obtulisset* is the pluperfect form of *offero* suggesting that the father *had offered* the son on the altar.

<sup>45</sup> Translation used is Anderson (1985) in Charlesworth's *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. Vol. Two.

<sup>46</sup> Davies and Chilton, (1978); Segal, (1996) 108; Swetnam, (1981) 48, *pace* Daly, (1977) 57; O'Neill, (1981) 14.

intended in 17.22 and 18.3.<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, if Jews are exhorted to remember Isaac in terms of his readiness to die, it seems unlikely that the author understood Isaac's act of obedience as inferior to that of the martyrs of the Maccabean revolt in that no atonement value was attributed to him.<sup>48</sup> Still, it could be objected that Abraham is used as an exemplary figure and he could not be considered a martyr. However, Abraham is not presented as being prepared to die, whereas Isaac is.

*Influence of Graeco-Roman Ideas on 4 Maccabees.* The author was knowledgeable about philosophies of the Hellenistic world, especially Stoic ideas (cf. 1.1, 16; 2.7, 22; 3.11; 6.38; 12.13, 19; 14.2, 6; 15.4, 10).<sup>49</sup> However, it has been noted that in spite of such influence the author is essentially a Jew writing within a Jewish tradition antagonistic to cultural convergence with Graeco-Roman culture.<sup>50</sup> Yet Williams believes that the source of ideas regarding atonement and vicarious suffering in 4 Maccabees is to be found in Greek ideas as such a source is not easily found in the OT.<sup>51</sup> As has been seen there is sufficient within the OT to supply the author of 4

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<sup>47</sup> Philo, *On Abraham* 178 understood the sacrifice to have been completed.

<sup>48</sup> So O'Neill, (1981) 14: he writes: 'If the seven brothers and their mother acted with the example of Isaac's sacrifice before their eyes, surely it is natural to assume that what they are said to have achieved by sacrifice is the same as what Isaac was assumed to have achieved by sacrifice...the whole passage is saturated with the image of Isaac's sacrifice'.

<sup>49</sup> Hadas, (1953) 116; Barclay, (1996) 369; however, Barclay points out that the book is not evidence of a text of high acculturation. In stoic ideas are more evidence of a familiarity with current popularizations of philosophy (p.371).

<sup>50</sup> Swetnam, (1981) 45; Barclay, (1996) 369; on p.371 Barclay writes: 'the philosophy of the treatise is present only to serve the interests of the author's Jewish commitments'.

<sup>51</sup> Williams, (1975) 184-185; Croy, (1998) 87, 106.

Maccabees with a sociologically and theologically relevant conceptual background.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, the author of 4 Maccabees is concerned to maintain community spirit and encourage faithfulness to Israelite tradition. In order to do so the author depicts ancient and recent examples of Israelite faithfulness. Barclay points out that reference is made frequently to the Jewish nation. The fathers of the nation are repeatedly recalled as the guardians of Israel's integrity who will welcome the martyrs after death (5.37; 13.17; 18.23). Jews refuse to violate their ancestors to keep the law (5.29) and cannot bear to bring shame upon them (9.2). As a spur to courage they bid one another to remember their origins (13.12) and address each other as 'Abrahamic offspring' (6.17, 22; 9.21; 18.1 etc.).<sup>53</sup> The veracity of the martyr narratives is not important; what is important is to provide examples of faithfulness. It is highly unlikely that an author who wishes to strengthen community identity and delineate clear social boundaries, would draw upon foreign thought for key doctrinal ideas such as atonement.<sup>54</sup> More likely the author would draw upon his own tradition.

Therefore, the suffering servant of Deutero-Isaiah, it is argued, provides the main

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<sup>52</sup> Indeed this is noted to some extent by Williams, but he simply thinks that the author was more influenced by Greek ideas. He does not acknowledge the extent to which the OT provides ideas of redemption from suffering. Moreover, on p. 189 he writes: '4 Maccabees is controlled by Greek views about the precipitous death of noblemen'. This influence is that 4 Maccabees does not need to justify or explain the hero. However, the fact that the author of 4 Maccabees draws upon Hebrew figures to encourage the faithful would suggest that he is justifying their death in that it was for God's law and that the present generation also had to remain faithful.

<sup>53</sup> Barclay, (1996) 373-374.

<sup>54</sup> Indeed, this is a point that VanderKam, (1994) 79 makes regarding Josephus's claim that the Essenes depended on Greek ideas for their belief in the after life. Detailed discussion below. Barclay, (1996) 374 emphasizes how important the motive of confirming the Jewish way of life is.

interpretative and conceptual background for 4 Maccabees' linking suffering and atonement as it did for Daniel 11.35.<sup>55</sup> The following similarities will be observed: (1) Eleazar and the seven sons experienced terrible pain and suffering. So also the servant of Deutero-Isaiah; (2) the fourth son has his tongue cut out, yet 'God still hears those who are silent' (10.18). So, too, is the suffering servant dumb before his slayer (Is.53.7); (3) although the sons are described as handsome (8.4), yet they are each described following their suffering as dismembered and deformed. They are clearly unrecognisable. So, too, the suffering servant (Is.52.13); (4) the bravery of the sons is marvelled (θαυμασάντων) at by the Gentiles (9.26; 17.16-17; 18.3). In Deutero-Isaiah it is said that they marvelled (θαυμάσονται) at him (LXX: 52.14); (5) as with Eleazar and the seven sons there was no deceit on their mouths for they would not eat unclean food, so also the servant (53.9); (6) finally, lexicographic parallels can be seen. 4 Maccabees 18.3 can be demonstrated as based on LXX Is. 52.14 and 53.12:<sup>56</sup>

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>Οὕτω <u>θαυμάσονται</u> ἔθνη παλλὰ ἐπ' αὐτῷ (52.14)</p> <p>Διατοῦτο αὐτὸς κληρονομήσει πολλοὺς</p> <p><u>ἀνθ' ὧν</u> παρεδόθη εἰς θάνατον ἡ ψυχὴ αὐτοῦ</p> | <p><u>ἀνθ' ὧν</u> διὰ τὴν εὐσέβειαν προέμενοι τὰ σώματα τοῖς πόνοις ἐκεῖνοι οὐ μόνον ὑπὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων <u>ἐθαυμάσθησαν</u> ἀλλὰ καὶ θείας μερίδος κατηξιώθησαν (18.3)</p> |
|---|--|

<sup>55</sup> There is debate as to the relationship between 2 Maccabees and 4 Maccabees. Many assume that 4 Maccabees draws upon 2 Maccabees for its atonement ideas (O'Hagan, [1974].107; Nickelsburg, [1972].109). If this is the case, it is important to see the similarities between Is. 52-53 and 2 Macc. 7, see Nickelsburg, (1972) 103-106.

<sup>56</sup> It is surprising that in a monograph dedicated to 2 and 4 Maccabees van Henten fails to mention 4 Maccabees 18.3 and provides only one footnote on Is. 52.13-53.12.

Nations were amazed by the suffering servant (52.14), people were amazed by those who suffered for righteousness (εὐσέβειαν). The suffering servant is said to have received a portion with the great, the martyrs of 18.3 will receive a divine portion. The idea of a divine portion may also have been motivated by the portion that the psalmist declares that a faithful person will receive (Ps.73.26 cf. 16.5). It could be argued that the suffering servant is not reported to have poured out his life for any group of people unlike the understanding in 18.3. However, Is.53.11 suggests that there was a point to the suffering and death of the suffering servant. It is that others might be accounted righteous. Moreover, the bearing of his people's sins suggests a suffering for the people. Suffering and faithfulness result in influencing the oppressor as well as encouraging the community. This is the sense in both texts, although 4 Maccabees is not as concerned with the nations as Deutero-Isaiah, the similarities are clear. But sociologically, martyrdom has been observed to have an effect on the observers. The Weiners write: 'It is the certainty of the martyr's conviction which makes its mark on the observers, and which evokes admiration and emulation'.<sup>57</sup> This is seen in both the above texts. Moreover, dying for one's beliefs ensures the continuity of one's convictions and validates the truth claims of the culture. This is particularly relevant in terms of 4 Maccabees as Israelite truth claims are intellectually challenged by the challenger, the martyr realised that dying will in itself validate Jewish claims and in some strange way prove the claims of the challenger erroneous.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Weiner, (1990) 22.

<sup>58</sup> For more detail of the sociology behind this see Weiner, (1990) 52-53.

*Josephus.*

Josephus is motivated to defend the Aqedah in Gentile eyes. However, Josephus was trained in Jewish exegesis, he boasted of his expertise in native Jewish learning (*Ant.*20.263) and writes of the priority of learning of Hebrew and Aramaic above that of Greek as also law and meaning of Scripture (*Ant.*20.264). He claimed he would never forget his ancestral customs (*War.*6.107).<sup>59</sup>

Josephus presents Isaac as a generous 25 year old who was willing to die (*Ant.*1.227-232). Josephus reports that Abraham informed Isaac that he was to be the sacrifice (*Ant.*1.228-231). There is a hint of the expiatory theme connected to the martyrological one. It is stated that the place of the binding is the place of the temple, consequently, the binding is linked to the various sacrifices carried out in the temple, such sacrifices that removed wicked deeds (*Ant.*1.226). Daly points out that Josephus does not make the association with the temple more explicit.<sup>60</sup> Still, Josephus does state explicitly that the sacrifice was to occur on

‘that mountain upon which King David afterwards built the temple’ (*Ant.*1.226 or 1.13.2)

Feldman points out that Josephus avoids theological issues and this is why he does not make associations with the Temple sacrifice, not even the Passover. Rather, Josephus’ concern was to provide an historical narrative.<sup>61</sup> Davies and Chilton argue that Josephus develops the Aqedah as a response to the war against Rome, and, therefore,

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<sup>59</sup> Barclay, (1996) 346-351 gives a good discussion of Josephus and his social context; see also Attridge, 1984 for a summary of Josephus’ works. Laqueur, (1970) 245-278 argues that Josephus’ work is not representative of Jewish exegesis.

<sup>60</sup> Daly, (1977) 58.

<sup>61</sup> Feldman, (1982) 119.

the text is seen as providing a proto-martyr figure for other Jews.<sup>62</sup> The Roman admiration for Jews who held out at Masada and who subsequently died may make this suggestion plausible (*War.* 7.405).

### *Targum Tradition.*

Most key Targum components of the tradition can be testified in first century tradition. There is a connection between the Aqedah and the Passover (Neofiti on Ex.12.42: Poem of the Four Nights). Neofiti reports that Isaac was 37 years old when he was offered on the altar. All the Targums on Gen.22 heighten Isaac's place in the Aqedah. He cries out to Abraham:

Bind me properly that I may not kick you and your offering be made unfit (Neof.22.10)

Presumably Isaac's concern to be bound is connected with his worry that he might move and the sacrificial knife would slip and blemish the sacrificial victim thus making it unfit for sacrifice.

The actions of Isaac seem to have been understood as bringing about God's mercy on his people:

'You may remember on their behalf the binding of Isaac their father, and loose and forgive them their sins and deliver them from all distress' (Frag.Targ.22.14)<sup>63</sup>

An expiatory function is attributed, according to Daly, on the basis that God answers Abraham's prayer that his obedience and Isaac's willingness might be remembered on behalf of Isaac's children.<sup>64</sup> However, that it was answered is only implicit, although in

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<sup>62</sup> Davies and Chilton, (1978) 521-522.

<sup>63</sup> The significance of this text, especially 'loose' will be discussed in terms of Rev.1.5 in chapter 10 section 2.

<sup>64</sup> Daly, (1977) 52.

other Jewish tradition it is much clearer (Mishnah *Taan.* 2.4). In all targumic traditions the Aqedah is believed to have occurred on the mountain of the Temple of the Lord (Frag.Targum 22.14). Vermes has argued that the daily sacrifice in the temple (*tamid*) was a memorial of Isaac's act.<sup>65</sup> It is to be observed in the Mishnah that עֶקְרָה is a technical term for the way the lamb is tied before slaughter (*m.Tamid* 4.1). It is possible that with the destruction of the Temple, the lamb was substituted with almsgiving or martyrdom, and both would remind God of the Aqedah.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Vermes, (1961) 206-208.

<sup>66</sup> A point that is supported by Davies and Chilton (1978).



## Summary of findings:

### *Isaac was informed of or knew his role as a victim*

|             |                |             |             |                |                |                |
|-------------|----------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Jubilees    | Pseudo-Philo   | Philo,      | 4 Macc.     | Josephus       | Targum         | 4Q225          |
| Not present | 32.2; 40.2     | On Abr.     | 16.20       | <i>Ant.</i>    | Neofiti:       | <b>Present</b> |
|             | <b>Present</b> | Not present | Not present | 1.228-231      | Gen.22.8       |                |
|             |                |             |             | <b>Present</b> | <b>Present</b> |                |

### *Isaac gave his consent and asked to be bound*

|             |                |             |                |                |                |                |
|-------------|----------------|-------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Jubilees    | Pseudo-Philo   | Philo On    | 4 Macc.        | Josephus       | Targum to      | 4Q225          |
| Not present | 32.3; 40.2     | Abr.        | 13.12          | <b>Present</b> | Ex. 12.42      | <b>Present</b> |
|             | <b>Present</b> | not present | <b>Present</b> |                | <b>Present</b> |                |

### *God would remember the binding of Isaac in favour of his descendants.*

|             |                      |             |                |                |                |             |
|-------------|----------------------|-------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|-------------|
| Jubilees    | Pseudo-Philo         | Philo On    | 4 Macc.        | Josephus       | Targums        | 4Q225       |
| Not present | 18.5; 32.1,3-4; 40.2 | Abr.        | 13.12          | <b>Present</b> | <b>Present</b> | Not present |
|             | <b>Present</b>       | Not present | <b>Present</b> |                |                |             |

### *The Aqedah was associated with the site of the Temple in Jewish tradition.*

|                |              |             |             |                |                |                |
|----------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Jubilees       | Pseudo-Philo | Philo On    | 4 Macc.     | Josephus       | Targum Ps-     | 4Q225          |
| 18.13          | Not Present  | Abr.        | Not Present | Ant. 1.226     | Jon to Lev.    | <b>Present</b> |
| <b>present</b> |              | Not present |             | <b>Present</b> | 9.2-3; Tg      | (Mount         |
|                |              |             |             |                | Song 1.13;     | Moriah)        |
|                |              |             |             |                | 2.17; 3.6.     |                |
|                |              |             |             |                | <b>Present</b> |                |

*It was a source of inspiration and instruction.*

|             |                |             |                        |             |                      |             |
|-------------|----------------|-------------|------------------------|-------------|----------------------|-------------|
| Jubilees    | Pseudo-Philo   | PhiloOnAbr. | 4 Macc.                | Josephus    | Targums              | 4Q225       |
| Not present | 32.1-4,; 40.2  | Not present | 13.12; 16.20;<br>18.11 | Not Present | Neofiti:<br>Gen.22.8 | Not present |
|             | <b>Present</b> |             | <b>Present</b>         |             | <b>Present</b>       |             |

*It was associated with vicarious expiation and atonement.*

|          |                |             |                                  |          |                      |             |
|----------|----------------|-------------|----------------------------------|----------|----------------------|-------------|
| Jubilees | Pseudo-Philo   | Philo On    | 4 Macc.                          | Josephus | Targums              | 4Q225       |
| Possibly | 32.3           | Abr.        | <b>Not explicit</b>              | Probable | Neofiti:<br>Gen.22.8 | Not present |
|          | <b>Present</b> | Not present | <i>vis-à-vis</i><br><b>Isaac</b> |          | <b>Present</b>       |             |

*Isaac's Sacrifice was understood as completed.*

|             |                |                |                 |             |                      |             |
|-------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|-------------|----------------------|-------------|
| Jubilees    | Pseudo-Philo   | Philo          | 4 Macc.         | Josephus    | Targums              | 4Q225       |
| Not present | 32.4           | OnAbr.177      | <b>Possible</b> | Not Present | Neofiti:<br>Gen.22.8 | Not present |
|             | <b>Present</b> | <b>present</b> |                 |             | <b>Present</b>       |             |

*Isaac: the prototype suffering Servant.* The starting point for understanding the development of Genesis 22 *haggadah* is to look closely at the importance of Is.52.13-53.12 as Vermes did in 1961.<sup>67</sup> Vicarious suffering for the sake of God was shown to

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<sup>67</sup> A key text here is Tg. Job 3.18: 'Jacob, called the young one, and Abraham, called the old one, are there, and Isaac, the Servant of the Lord (עֶבֶד דִּי יְהוָה) who was delivered from the bonds by his Master' (Vermes, [1961] 203; also McNamara, (1966) 167; Segal, (1996) 105 is unconvinced on the basis that Vermes depends too much on Palestinian Targum tradition. However, Vermes locates Targum tradition within early tradition.

run through the major strata of the canon from Moses to the prophets in chapter three. Vindication would come through suffering. It was suggested that the *terminus post quem* for the vicarious suffering was associated with the need to remain faithful against the seduction of the nations. It is suggested here that the Aqedah arises in response to the experience of religious persecution. It has been seen that during the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes (167 BCE), Jewish writers were concerned to develop a theology of martyrdom (see Daniel 8-12; 2 & 4 Macc.). A development of Gen.22 has also occurred in which Isaac is presented as an exemplary figure, although there is no evidence to suggest that this occurred during the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, yet the seeds may have been sown in this period. Rosenberg calls Isaac the 'prototype of the 'suffering servant'.<sup>68</sup> This indeed seems a plausible description on the basis of Pseudo-Philo, 4 Maccabees, 4Q225, Josephus, and the Targums in which he is presented as one who willingly suffered. Consequently, the nameless, suffering servant of Deutero-Isaiah was the original exemplary figure. Vermes presented the following points: Isaac freely offered his life and it was accepted by God in favour of his descendants, so too the suffering servant; the servant is compared to a lamb brought to the slaughter. Isaac was also a holocaust lamb.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Rosenberg, (1965) 385.

<sup>69</sup> Vermes, (1961) 202; see also Levenson, (1993) 201. It was of course a ram that was offered in Gen. 22 and not a lamb. This change has never been explained. Is it not possible that the choice of lamb was indeed influenced by the lamb of Is. 53.7?

#### d. *Moses*

Fischel observed that later Jewish literature presented Moses as a prophet-martyr who was disbelieved, rejected, mocked, attacked and almost stoned.<sup>70</sup> Development of the biblical material on Moses *vis-à-vis* suffering and death is found in the Babylonian Talmud:

‘R. Simlah expounded: Why did Moses our teacher yearn to enter the land of Israel? Did he want to eat of its fruits or satisfy himself from its bounty? But thus spake Moses, “Many precepts were commanded to Israel which can only be fulfilled in the land of Israel. I wish to enter the land so that they may all be fulfilled by me”. The Holy One, blessed be He, said to him, “Is it only to receive the reward [for obeying the commandments] that thou seekest? I ascribe it to thee as if thou didst perform them”; as it is said, Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out his soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors, yet he bare the sins of many, and made intercession for the transgressor ’ (b. *Sotah* 14a).<sup>71</sup>

The text explains why the suffering servant of Is.53.12 was identified with Moses. It refers to Moses’ offering of his life that Israel’s sins may be forgiven (Ex.32.32). In addition, Jeremias draws upon a rabbinic tradition:

‘Why did Moses die in the wilderness? In order that the wilderness generation should return and rise again through his merits’.<sup>72</sup>

The texts elevate Moses’ death to that of a sacrifice for the people. However, does *b.*

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<sup>70</sup> Fischel, (1946-47) 275 lists primary data: for example, Midr. Tannaïm, p. 111, and PRK 112a; Yalk. Shimeoni Is. 1.5; Ex. R. 7 and Sotah 35a; Num. R. 18.4. All texts are very late.

<sup>71</sup> Quoted from Jeremias, (1967a) 854, see also p.873; See Chavasse, (1964) 159-160; Fischel, (1946-47) 372-373 who lists rabbinic primary data supporting the belief that Moses had borne vicarious suffering: Ber.32a, Samuel; Siphre Dt. on 33.21 and b.Sotah 14a. There is also evidence in the early third century that Moses was put to death see Fischel, p.275 on (Origen, *In Matthew* 10.18).

<sup>72</sup> Quoted in Jeremias, (1967a) 854.

*Sotah* 14a represent ideas circulating in the first century? Scholars supporting a first century date cannot provide a text earlier than the third century. Nevertheless, the presentation of Moses in the OT as a suffering servant and the later connection in *b.Sotah* 14a between Moses and the suffering servant of Is.52.13-53.12, raise the possibility that Moses was understood as the suffering servant of Is.52.13-53.12 in the first century. It is plausible that a Jew looking for redemption from oppression might look back to the founder of their nation, Moses, one who led them out of oppression.<sup>73</sup> However, it is surprising that 4 Maccabees, an important text *vis-à-vis* suffering and atonement, does not present Moses as an exemplary figure. This may suggest that the author did not perceive Moses as a martyr figure, like Isaac or Abel. This would urge caution in attributing too much significance to Moses in all later material. Yet Moses was a key figure to NT writers and is directly referred to more than any other OT hero.

Jeremias argues that a suffering Moses was developed beyond the picture of the historical Moses both in Acts and Hebrews. He writes: 'Acts paints a picture of the suffering messenger of God who was misunderstood and rejected (7.17-44). The Moses of Hebrews (11.23-29) is one of the heroic models of faith'.<sup>74</sup> However, regarding Acts, of the twenty-one verses which deal with Moses few mention anything about his suffering and rejection (vv.29, 35 and 39). There is no mention of Moses bearing the sins of the people, and no allusion to Ex.32.32. Heb.11.23-29 offers Moses

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<sup>73</sup> Hafemann, (1990) observes the figure of Moses in later tradition and points out the development of Moses as an authoritative figure for Jews.

<sup>74</sup> Jeremias, (1967a) 865; D'Angelo, (1979) 17-64 uses the word martyr to depict the Moses of Heb.11.23-29.

as an example of faith to be followed:

‘By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called a son of the Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to share ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He considered abuse suffered for the Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he looked to the reward. By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king; for he endured as seeing him who is invisible’ (Heb.11.24-27)

Again it is not possible to see the suffering servant of Is.52.13-53.12 as underlying this text. There is a development in the aspect of suffering but no sense of Moses bearing the sins of the people.

*e. Suffering in 1 Enoch*

In the Epistle of Enoch, oppression of the righteous by sinners is a prime fact of life.<sup>75</sup>

In some cases, this oppression has led to the death of the righteous (99.15; 100.7; 103.15). Such oppression will not go unchallenged and God’s day will see the vindication of the righteous (94.9; 96.8; 97.3, 5; 98.8, 10; 99.15; 100.4; 103.4;103.7-8; 104.5).

There is clearly no classic martyr type presented in open dispute with the challenger.

The tradition is of a righteous group being killed by an oppressor. Their tradition is one that is challenged by the rulers and oppressors, who put to death their ancestors.

In the same way, the murdered righteous also may have fuelled the zeal for their community and readiness to die even though they were not originally presented in the challenge-response situation such as in Dan.3.

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<sup>75</sup> Nickelsburg, (1972) 113.

f. *The Maccabean Martyrs*

*1 Maccabees*. Chapter 2:15-28, 49-68 tells the story of Mattathias and his sons. The king decrees that everyone should abandon their own laws and religion (1.42). The king's officers enforce the decree upon Mattathias and his sons. The officers are in the tradition of wise persecutors, who do not want martyrs on their hands; rather apostasy is their aim. They seek apostasy through seducing the faithful by promising friendship with the king and much gold and silver (2.18). However, Mattathias refuses and slays the officer (2.25). On his death bed Mattathias reinforces to his sons the importance of keeping God's covenant even until death (2.50) by recounting the well known narratives from their own culture of obedient men who were prepared to suffer and die:

'Now therefore my sons, be ye zealous for the law, and give your lives for the covenant of your fathers. Call to remembrance what acts our fathers did in their time; so shall you receive great honour and an everlasting name' (2.50-51)

Dying for the covenant would result in their own names being immortalised within their tradition. Their narrative would be told to future believers to encourage them to be obedient to death. They gain honour by their readiness to die in that they will be rejected by the condemner. Redemption is not the motivating force that drives the martyrs to die. Rather it is zeal for God's law that is significant. Forsaking God's law is worse than death.

*2 Maccabees* 7. In chapter 7 the constancy and obedience of seven brothers and their mother when commanded to eat unclean food is told.

Van Henten sees in 2 Macc.7 parallels with philosophers (Socrates is the popular

one).<sup>76</sup> However, it is unlikely that a Jewish author would draw from that which he presents as the antithesis of a Jewish worldview, especially when sufficient can be found from his own tradition. The author of 2 Maccabees was not acculturated to Graeco-Roman culture, rather he was antagonistic to it and would use its own ideas in response to it. It is possible that the author knew of the Graeco-Roman heroes and philosophers who died for their beliefs and was motivated by these traditions to look to his own tradition.

Nickelsburg comments that the story anticipates God's vengeance on the Jews' enemies and is not specifically concerned with the post-mortem rescue of those put to death.<sup>77</sup> To this extent Downing claims 2 Maccabees is completely grounded in the thought of the OT.<sup>78</sup> However, there is no concern for the post-mortem rescue of the martyr according to Downing in the OT and yet there is in 2 Macc.7.23 which might suggest a borrowing from Graeco-Roman ideas. Yet the concern for vengeance and the rescue of those put to death is seen clearly (Pss.49.10-11, 14-16; 73.19, 24 cf. Dan.11.35 and 12.3).<sup>79</sup> In these texts there is the yearning for the fall of the enemy and the rescue of the oppressed or murdered. The key text for 2 Macc.7 is Is.52.13-53.12, as Nickelsburg has shown.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Van Henten, (1996) 72.

<sup>77</sup> Nickelsburg, (1972) 102.

<sup>78</sup> So Downing, (1963) 283. Hengel, (1981) 69 also observes that both 2 and 4 Maccabees contain numerous Palestinian traditions.

<sup>79</sup> Strangely, in Nickelsburg's excellent and thorough treatment of resurrection, immortality and eternal life, Pss.49 and 73 are not treated at all even if to dismiss their relevance. See also Ps.16.10; see Bauckham's discussion of resurrection, (1998).

<sup>80</sup> Nickelsburg, (1972) 103-109.



V.12 reports that the king marvelled (ἐκπλήσσεσθαι) at the young man's courage. The verb does not compare with Is.52.15 (LXX see above). It is not unlikely that the author, although thoroughly trained in Greek thought, would equally be comfortable with the OT. He certainly sees the importance of the language of Israel (v.21). It is proposed here that v.12 was modelled on Is.52.14 (MT) and not on the LXX. ἐκπλήσσεσθαι occurs chiefly for שָׂמַם. This word describes the response of the רבנים:

כַּאֲשֶׁר שָׂמַם עֲלֵיהֶם רַבִּים

רב can mean 'leader' or 'mighty one' as well as 'many'. The author of v.12 may have taken this to refer to kings and his officers who looked in astonishment and shock. V.14 reports the speech of the fourth son. In this speech the son looks for the reward of his faithfulness:

'It is good, being put to death by men, to look for hope from God to be raised up again by him' (cf. vv. 9, 11 and 23)

Here the rescue is the resurrection. Evidence of resurrection in the Bible has been observed and although it was not a dominant theme, there was certainly enough to allow for such development. There is something to Russell's point when he writes that the dominant historical origin for the establishment of belief in the resurrection is the fact of martyrdom.<sup>81</sup> 1 Enoch 22 is pre-Maccabean and is evidence of martyrdom, which suggests a martyr mindedness even before the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes. It is best to see the interconnectedness of the question of theodicy and resurrection. Martyrs are the innocent faithful ones, and some redemption is to be found for them.

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<sup>81</sup> Russell, (1960) 146.

For this purpose, it is important simply to observe the connection between resurrection and the rescue of the martyr.

Vv.37-38 depict the seventh son in the role of an intercessor for his nation. Through suffering and death God's wrath may be removed. The thought here is clearly that of suffering for the good of another.<sup>82</sup> V.33 suggests that the offering up of body and life for God (v.37) was considered a necessary chastening (παιδείας cf. MT. Is.53.5c: מוֹסֵר) in order that they might be one with God again. Again, the biblical background provides the interpretative framework for the author. More specifically is Is.53.5. The author of vv.33 and 37 was clearly influenced by Is.53.5 for his use of παιδείας as a pre-requisite for the putting right of the nation with God. The synonymous parallelism of Is.53.5b makes clearer the sense of v.5a:

וְחִבְרָתוֹ נִרְפָּא לָנוּ

The παιδείας could mean being heavily beaten (חִבְרָתוֹ) as LXX and MT suggest. Resulting from his beating is the healing of others. It is, therefore, possible to establish 2 Macc.7 firmly within the biblical tradition regarding vicarious suffering and indeed the punishment of the persecutors.

#### *g. Suffering in Wisdom of Solomon 2-5*

Proposed dates for the text vary from the third century BCE to the second century CE.<sup>83</sup> However, the proposed dates are such that persecution and pressure to apostatise were realities for the Jewish communities. The more relevant question for

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<sup>82</sup> Downing, (1963) 282 writes as though this were a new development, but this is not.

<sup>83</sup> Barclay, (1996) 451-452; Grabbe, (1997) 8.

this study is whether the text shares and develops concepts associated with biblical tradition *vis-à-vis* a figure/s suffering for their witness to God, or does it draw upon ideas outside of the OT. North wrote that: ‘the writer of the Wisdom of Solomon was familiar with Isa. xl-lxvi needs no proof, and his descriptions of the sufferings of the righteous man in v.1-7 reads like a paraphrase of Isa.lii.15-liii.6’.<sup>84</sup>

In spite of North’s confidence, the Wisdom of Solomon engenders discussion regarding the stock of tradition from which the author draws. The argument here will be again that the writer is at odds with the dominant power and is unlikely to appropriate positively from that which he despises, especially if his own authoritative traditions within the Bible contain sufficient to draw, thus North’s confidence is supported. Although the author is at home in hellenistic thought, represented in the sophisticated vocabulary and rhetorical features,<sup>85</sup> the following discussion shows that the text is antagonistic to non-Jews and Wisdom of Solomon employs hellenistic learning not to integrate Judaism with the hellenistic environment but to present a sophisticated attack upon it.<sup>86</sup>

*The Text.* The unrighteous are the wealthy ones who persecute the poor (2.7 and 2.10 cf. Psalms 49; 73 discussed above). Nickelsburg suggests that the kings are the rich ones.<sup>87</sup> They are presented as those who deny the existence of a just God and the belief in a continuing existence after death (2.1).<sup>88</sup> Moreover, they use up the

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<sup>84</sup> North, (1956) 8.

<sup>85</sup> Barclay, (1996) 183.

<sup>86</sup> Barclay, (1996) 184.

<sup>87</sup> Nickelsburg, (1972) 58.

<sup>88</sup> It is interesting to note the similarities with Palestinian targum traditions *vis-à-vis* the conflict

creation's resources with no care for others, resulting in the oppression of the poor (2.6, 10 cf. Ezek.34.18-19). The Wisdom of Solomon exemplifies economic critique of the ruling powers. On the other hand, the righteous are those who admonish the unrighteous (2.12) and identify themselves with a knowledge of God (2.13, 16). They believe that God will punish the unrighteous (2.18). God proves their patience and righteousness through the suffering they experience at the hands of the unrighteous (2.19). Chapter 3 develops the scene in which the righteous are said to believe and hope in immortality (3.4 cf. 2.23; 3.3):

‘For though they be punished in the sight of men, yet is their hope full of immortality’

Further, they will be exalted and judge the nations (3.8) as a result of being found righteous through suffering (3.5). Chapter 4.10-15 depicts the lot of God's people. Those who pleased God were taken from the evil ones who sought to change their minds (vv.10-11). Martyrdom may be the way that they have taken rather than deny their faith. They lived not the expected time, they were taken quickly (v.14). The wicked ones saw the obedience of God's faithful witnesses, but did not understand (v.15). 4.17-18 depicts the punishment of the unrighteous:

‘For they [the unrighteous] shall see the end of the wise, and shall not understand what God in his counsel hath decreed of him, and to what end the Lord hath set him in safety. They shall see him, and despise him; but God shall laugh them to scorn:<sup>89</sup> and they shall hereafter be a vile carcass, and a reproach among the dead for evermore’ (4.17-18).

In chapter 5 the righteous man is depicted, at the last judgement, before his oppressors (5.1). The oppressor, when confronted by the ability of the righteous man

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between Abel and Cain. Abel supports a loving God who has made a creation with order, but not so Cain.

<sup>89</sup> Note the allusion to Ps.2.4 here.

to suffer for his faith, is troubled and amazed at their hope (v.2). Indeed, the oppressor is presented as repentant (vv.3-4). Thus, the honour of the righteous is gained by neutralizing the deviant label and gaining honour by being rejected by the leaders.

Reese provides a thorough study of the hellenistic influence on Wisdom of Solomon.<sup>90</sup> Possible influences on the writer may have been Stoic thought and stories regarding the unjust treatment of wise men in Greek literature, such as Socrates and Diogenes.<sup>91</sup> Lange suggested that the writing was influenced directly by Platonic thought.<sup>92</sup> However, the thesis defended here is that Is.52.13-53.12 and Psalms 49 and 73 provide the conceptual background for the chapters 2-5 of The Wisdom of Solomon.<sup>93</sup> The following conceptual parallels are found and have been observed above.<sup>94</sup>

Wis.2.19-20/ Is.53.7-9

Wis.5.1bc/ Is.52.14

Wis. 3.2-3/ Is.53.7-10

Wis.5.2/ Is.52.15

Wis.4.19/ Is.52.15

Wis.5.3-4/ Is.53.3, 10

Wis.5.1a/ Is.52.14

Wis. 5.6/ Is.53.6

In addition, a lexicographical parallel is seen between Wis.2.13-16, which makes reference to  $\pi\alpha\hat{\iota}\varsigma$ , with Is.52.2, 13 (LXX). Of particular interest here is the theme of

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<sup>90</sup> Reese, (1970).

<sup>91</sup> Reese, (1970) 112-113.

<sup>92</sup> Lange, (1936) 293-302.

<sup>93</sup> So Suggs, (1957); Nickelsburg, (1972); Kolarick, (1991); this is a position that not even Reese (1970) 113 can deny when he writes that 'the Book of Isaiah serves as the basis for much of the author's speculation in Wis 3-5'. Surprisingly Barclay, (1996), although he sees the book as culturally antagonistic to non-Jews, never discusses the possible influence of Is.52.13-53.12 either in rejection or acceptance.

<sup>94</sup> Parallels are found in Nickelsburg, (1972) 62.

immortality. In 3.4 the ability of the martyr figure to undergo suffering was connected with his conviction that the end would be exaltation and redemption by God. There is no reason to read Greek ideas in this verse. The hope of continued relationship with God after the death of the body is not as foreign to biblical tradition as those arguing for the influence of Greek ideas would like to suggest. The broad conceptual background behind the reward of the Lord for those who have been persecuted and martyred is the suffering servant of Is.52.13-53.12.<sup>95</sup> However, it need not be confined to Deutero-Isaiah. The Wisdom of Solomon can be seen as a conflation of concepts which may have originally been connected within the OT. Schaberg, for example, has argued for the influence of Psalm 2 on the author of Wis.1-5.<sup>96</sup> The conceptual parallels (not lexicographical!) are persuasive for her case.<sup>97</sup> Ps.2.1-3 depicts the wicked conspiring against God and the righteous (cf. Wis.2.10-20). Both are addressed to the rulers of the earth (Ps.2.2/ /Wis.1.1). Ps.2.4 depicts God laughing the unrighteous to scorn (cf. Wis.4.18). In both the righteous man is known as God's son (Ps.2.7/ /Wis.2.18). The unrighteous will be broken by God (Ps.2.9/ /Wis.4.19). In Ps.2.10 there is the hope that the rulers of the earth will be wise and such is also found in Wis.6.1, 9. Finally, there is the proclamation to the rulers to serve God in fear (Ps.2.11 cf. Wis.6.21). Psalm 2 describes the hope that the people of Israel had in their king and that he would rule with justice and bring other nations to Yahweh. The role of the king was not dissimilar to that of the servant in Deutero-Isaiah, although the

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<sup>95</sup> So Kolarick, (1991) 99.

<sup>96</sup> Schaberg, (1982) 75-101.

<sup>97</sup> Although there may be lexicographical parallels: Ps.2.4 cf. Wis.4.18: 'the Lord will laugh them to scorn'.

context of hope has changed, in Deutero-Isaiah the servant of Yahweh will suffer. However, the conflation of concept in Ps.2 and Is.52.13-53.12 should not be surprising. Ultimately in both texts is the hope that God will exalt his people through his servant/s and that the nations, too, will serve God in fear and justice. In addition, and not previously proposed is that Psalms 49 and 73 provided much of the conceptual framework for Wisdom of Solomon. Ps.73.12 presents the wealthy as apparently untroubled. However, their end is predicted and there is a hint of immortality for the righteous (see above discussion). Also, Ps.49.15 influences Wis.4.10, 14 (both echoing Gen.5.24).

The evidence that Wis.2-5 is firmly rooted within the OT is compelling. Although the text is modelled on Greek literary convention,<sup>98</sup> the writer drew upon biblical tradition in difficult times to persuade his audience to remain faithful to tradition. Reese opposed the biblical background and especially Suggs' thesis that Wisdom of Solomon 2-5 was a midrash on Is.52.13-53.12 simply on the grounds that Wisdom of Solomon was Greek in style.<sup>99</sup> However, as Mack and Murphy observe, this kind of scholarship is in poverty inasmuch as it 'has looked only for the system of Hellenistic-philosophical ideas'.<sup>100</sup> Rather, the text must be approached from a greater grasp of biblical theology. As Reese suggested, Jewish students are the audience and the writer wanted to show them the relation between their sacred history and the growth of the entire human race.<sup>101</sup> This may indeed be the case, which supports the view here that

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<sup>98</sup> Which Reese has shown, (1970).

<sup>99</sup> Reese, (1970) 113.

<sup>100</sup> Mack & Murphy, (1986) 387.

<sup>101</sup> Reese, (1970) 150.

the writer was concerned with his Jewish audience and their possible apostasy. The concern of the writer of Wis.14.21 is a polemic against idolatry.<sup>102</sup> The author attacks all engaged in the manufacture of objects of worship whether they work in wood (13.11-14.7) or clay (15.7-17) in a way, Barclay notes, of which Deutero-Isaiah would be proud.<sup>103</sup> Barclay understands the text as antagonistic to Graeco-Roman culture.<sup>104</sup> He believes it appropriates Greek learning 'not to integrate his Judaism with his environment but to construct all the more sophisticated an attack upon it!'.<sup>105</sup> Such is the concern constant throughout the biblical corpus from Israel's settlement in Canaan up to the period of the Maccabees.

#### *h. Testament of Moses*

The dating of this text varies widely and anywhere between the Maccabean revolt (168-165BCE) to the Bar Kochba revolt (132-135CE). The text is concerned to maintain faith in difficult circumstances. This is done by depicting Moses reviewing history until the time of Antiochus Epiphanes (if the earlier date is accepted) and the readiness of Taxo and his sons to die rather than transgress the commandments (chapter 9) . Moses is firstly presented as an exemplary figure who suffered many things (3.11). Israel is seen as one who continually rebels against God (5.3). Consequently, in line with Lev.26 and Deut.28, Israel will suffer; in this case at the hands of a cruel king (6.5-6).<sup>106</sup> Those who remain faithful to the covenant will be

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<sup>102</sup> So Barclay, (1996) 187.

<sup>103</sup> Barclay, (1996) 187.

<sup>104</sup> Barclay, (1996) 183.

<sup>105</sup> Barclay, (1996) 184.

<sup>106</sup> Tromp, (1993) 202 points to Herod as the king mainly because of the 34 years he is said to reign



tortured and crucified until they blaspheme the covenant (8.1, 4). Particularly relevant for this chapter is T.Mos. 9-10, the recounting of Taxo and his seven sons who instead of blaspheming would rather die. In 9.1-7 many of the components of a narrative martyrdom are seen. The whole confrontation is staged as a public dispute in which the challenger seeks to dispossess the challenged of their honour. The respondent's response is to prefer death and thus be rejected by the challenger thereby gaining honour. Taxo exhorts his sons to undertake fasting, retirement into a cave and the deliberate courting of death. It is the belief of the author that the blood of Taxo and his sons would be avenged before the Lord (9.7 cf. 10.2-3). In chapter 10 the consequences of God avenging his people is added to. In v.7 the idols of the ruling nation are clearly hated by God and will be destroyed. Following the destruction of the nations, God's righteous people are to be raised to the heights and their place will be in heaven (v.9), whence they will see their enemies on the earth (v.10). Nickelsburg shows that the Testament of Moses is a rewriting of Deut.31-34. However, he suggests that the exaltation to the stars and the viewing of the enemies beneath it are new ideas to Deut.31-34.<sup>107</sup> This new material, argues Nickelsburg, is drawn from material related to but earlier than Dan.12.1-3. Also of significance is Is.52.13 in which the servant will be exalted. In Dan.12.3 the *maskilim* will shine in the firmament as the stars shine forever. Their exaltation is connected with their suffering (11.34). As has been argued above, so is this the case with the suffering servant of Deutero-Isaiah (50.6; 53.5, 7). Likewise, similarities can be seen with Taxo and his sons. However, there are differences in emphasis: the focus in T.Mos. is more concerned with how

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(v.5) which coheres with Josephus *War* 1. 665; *Ant.* 17. 191.

<sup>107</sup> Nickelsburg, (1972) 29.

God punishes the enemies than providing a positive vindication of Israel. Still, the form of vindication needs exploring in more detail.

Taxo and his sons can be understood as eschatological martyrs insofar as their deaths are immediately related to the coming of God's kingdom:

'Then his kingdom will appear throughout his whole creation. Then the devil will have an end. Yea, sorrow will be led away with him' (10.1 cf. Rev.11)

This is a significant idea. Licht points out that Taxo's exhortation to martyrdom is more than motivated by the need for perseverance of the Law in the face of persecution. Such is the motivation of those who were crucified (8.1).<sup>108</sup> Distinctive here according to Licht is that the eschaton will come because vengeance is provoked by the readiness of Taxo to die.<sup>109</sup> Therefore, as Licht writes: 'his [Taxo] martyrdom is a necessary link in the predetermined scheme of suffering and salvation'.<sup>110</sup>

#### i. *Manual of Discipline (1QS)*

It seems likely that the Qumran community represent ideas and understandings that impinged on non-Qumran Jews.<sup>111</sup> Jeremias acknowledges that martyrdom and suffering having atoning value, and such a link was influenced by Is.53.<sup>112</sup> However, he

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<sup>108</sup> Licht, (1961) 96.

<sup>109</sup> Licht, (1961) 97.

<sup>110</sup> Licht, (1961) 99.

<sup>111</sup> Moyise, (1995) 106-107 points out that the exegesis of scripture by Qumran and Revelation have parallels.

<sup>112</sup> Jeremias, (1971) 287-299.

denied the existence of the Isaianic Servant Songs within Qumran's consciousness.<sup>113</sup>  
This will be disputed.

*Manual of Discipline:*

'They [the Council of the Community] shall preserve the faith in the Land with steadfastness and meekness and shall atone for sin by the practice of justice and by suffering the sorrows of affliction' (1QS 8.3f)

It is clear here that suffering is associated with atonement similarly to the above texts. In addition the council of the community, who are three priests and twelve men,<sup>114</sup> are said to be:

'witnesses to the truth at the Judgement, and shall be the elect of Goodwill who shall atone for the Land and pay to the wicked their reward' (1QS 8.5f)

Black proposes that these men fulfil the mission of the suffering servant of Isaiah 53.10, 12.<sup>115</sup> Black believes the witness theme (1QS 8.5f) is the link with the fourth suffering song. He writes: 'we have in these verses the developed theological conception of a community or group within a community identifying itself with the Isaianic Remnant and attributing to its sufferings a redemptive function'.<sup>116</sup> However, as Black observes, there are differences in that the atonement is for Israel. Presumably Black means the land of Israel that has been defiled (cf. Num.35.33; Deut.32.43).<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Jeremias, (1967b) 685

<sup>114</sup> Sanders, (1981) 301 suggests that the subject is the community as a whole.

<sup>115</sup> Black, (1961) 129; see Bruce, (1960) 60; *pace* Garnet, (1976) 65-66. He argues that the figures do not atone. He does not provide any discussion regarding line 5, and disputes the atoning value on the basis of his translation of lines 1-4.

<sup>116</sup> Black, (1961) 129; see Bruce, (1960) 60.

<sup>117</sup> Black, (1961) 129.

Garnet rightly observes the cleansing of the land in contrast to such texts as Num.35.33 and Deut.32.43; moreover, that the focus is on vengeance that will fall upon the wicked, a point that Brownlee makes: suffering invokes God's wrath.<sup>118</sup> Garnet argues that the atonement is to be effected by the punishment of the wicked, so that the land will no longer be polluted with their abominations.<sup>119</sup> However, the wicked cannot be said to atone. It would seem more likely that the suffering of the faithful will bring about the cleansing of the land (cf. T.Mos. 9.1-7). There is no sense that the 15 men are witnesses to the nations. But as Black points out, there is no reason to read into this sectarian views. Rather, such ideas 'spring from the prophetic tradition of Israel'.<sup>120</sup>

j. (1QH) *The Hymns of Thanksgiving.*

The author of 1 QH17.(formerly 9) 6-8, 23-27 describes himself in language resembling Is.53. Lines 6-8 describes the sense of desolation the servant has experienced but he believes that God has not forsaken him. He has received the gift of supplication:

'Thou hast put supplication in the mouth of Thy servant'

The poet writes of the results of his suffering:

And Thy wounds were for healing (23-27)                      and with his stripes we are healed (Is.53.5)

For 1QH it is not made explicit whom the suffering healed, whereas the vicarious aspect is more obvious in Is.53.5. However, interest in Is.53 is present at Qumran. Yet

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<sup>118</sup> Brownlee, (1983) 290.

<sup>119</sup> Garnet, (1976) 66.

<sup>120</sup> Black, (1961) 129.

the wounds for healing may be connected with the many being illuminated through the servant's suffering:

'In Thy glory did my light shine forth for a light out of darkness hast Thou caused to shine'  
(17.23-27)

In 1QH 12.(formerly 7) 27:

'And through me Thou hast illumined the face of the Many [Vermes has the congregation]'

The Deutero-Isaiah theme of the servant being a witness to many is clear (cf. Is.53.11). VanderKam observes from the Thanksgiving Psalms that the righteous suffer at the hand of the wicked, but God saves them from the troubles and judges the evil; moreover, they receive wisdom and knowledge of God and they are raised to an everlasting height and enjoy communion with the angels.<sup>121</sup>

'Thou hast redeemed my soul from the Pit,  
and from the hell of Abaddon  
Thou hast raised me up to everlasting height (1QH 3.20)<sup>122</sup>

In this text is raised the question of resurrection belief among the Qumran community. Josephus reported that the Essenes<sup>123</sup> shared the belief in the immortality of the soul in the same way as the Greeks (*War* 2.154-155). He speaks, also, of life after death in terms of reincarnation (see *Ant.* 18.14 and *War* 2.163).<sup>124</sup> However, this is contrary to

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<sup>121</sup> VanderKam, (1994) 63-64.

<sup>122</sup> VanderKam, (1994) 80 refers to the text as 3.19-23 whereas Vermes as hymn 10 and formerly 5.

<sup>123</sup> On the whole I have no reason to dispute Sukenik, the first to propose that the Essenes were connected with the scrolls found at Qumran; *pace* Golb (1980) 1-24.

<sup>124</sup> For example, Beall, (1988) 105 notes Josephus says that the Pharisees believed in reincarnation, the only kind of after life intelligible to pagans. Josephus writes: 'every soul is imperishable, but the soul of the good alone passes into another body, while the souls of the wicked suffer eternal punishment (*War* 2.163).

Hippolytus of Rome (*circa* 170-236 CE) who reports that the Essenes acknowledge both that the flesh will rise again, and that it will be immortal (*Refutation of All Heresies* 9.27). VanderKam is right to doubt Josephus' account writing: 'This description has peculiar features, not least of which is that the Essenes, who otherwise are pictured as opposed to pagan teachings, are compared with the Greeks'.<sup>125</sup> This coheres with the point argued throughout this thesis that a sectarian group with clear anti-ruling nation beliefs would not engage with the ruling nation's belief system. Indeed, Qumran had no need to do so as they had ample tradition to draw and develop upon and were isolated from the mainstream. Moreover, Josephus' account at this point must be suspect on the grounds that he writes to pagans to commend the Jewish tradition. Further, as Black pointed out, there is no evidence for such a belief among the Essenes in their literature.<sup>126</sup> The language in 1QH.3.20 resembles closely Ps.49.15:

'But God will ransom my soul from the power of Sheol,  
for he will receive me' (Ps.49.15)

In the discussion regarding the Psalms 49 and 73 it was argued that the origins of resurrection are evident in these psalms. However, the question of exactly what was intended was a more difficult question. There was no one understanding of resurrection in Judaism.<sup>127</sup> In 1QH.3.20 the late twentieth century reader should not seek or understand the writer to have a fully coherent view of life after death. All that can be said from this text is that the poet believes and hopes for a continued

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<sup>125</sup> VanderKam, (1994) 79; Beall, (1988) 105.

<sup>126</sup> Black, (1961) 138.

<sup>127</sup> See Russell, (1960) 157-162, for summary of different understandings.

relationship after death with God. Fortunately, a recent publication from the Qumran scrolls has added to the data from which more can be established regarding ideas of a Jewish group regarding belief in the after life and may cohere with Hippolytus' account (see above). In the so called Messianic Apocalypse (4 Q521):

אז ירפא הללים ומתים יחיה עניים יבשר

'For he will heal the wounded, and revive the dead and bring good news to the poor' (4Q521 line 12)

VanderKam et al are confident that the reviving of the dead indicates a belief in the bodily resurrection.<sup>128</sup>

#### 1. 4Q540/541 = 4QAhA

Little can be concluded regarding this fragment but it remains early evidence regarding a key figure who teaches the nations and is rejected. Here a priestly figure is mentioned who will atone for all the sons of his generation and all the sons of his people. There may be a suggestion here that associated with this figure is a mission to all peoples.<sup>129</sup> Indeed, it is said that

'his eternal sun will shine, and his fire will spring forth to all the ends of the earth'

However, the figure will encounter rejection. Those who he teaches the will of God will speak against him.

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<sup>128</sup> Tabor & Wise, (1992) 149-162; VanderKam, (1994) 81; Puech, (1994) 235-256; Vermes, (1995) 244.

<sup>129</sup> Puech, (1994) 243.

### 3. *Summary of Findings*

Although the events that occurred under Antiochus Epiphanes are significant to the development of Jewish martyrology, the traditions found in the OT suggest that the Jew would be one who would expect to suffer and die because of their faith in Yahweh. In post-biblical Jewish tradition it was seen that Jews accommodated themselves to varying degrees to the Graeco-Roman culture. The literature of particular interest to this thesis was seen to be the type that was antagonistic to the foreign culture.

The enemies of God are like Cain, and the righteous like Abel. Abel in the NT and 4 Macc.18.11 is an example of a faithful witness who is put to death as a result of his obedience to God. Abel's death is understood as bringing about justice. The targumists felt the need to explain the Cain and Abel story in line with their understanding of how God works, i.e., with love and justice, in this case that God judges justly and will punish his enemies. Abel's death is exemplary and to be imitated, he is justified by God based on principles of justice and love. The importance of Heb.12.24 was observed in which the idea of the day of vengeance is critiqued by principles of the compassion of Jesus.

LAB 6 and 38 depicts ancient figures in a conflict situation with the authorities. The identity, honour and shame of the Jew are depicted in the *challenge-response game* by expecting them to reject God and thus lose honour and become shameless people, thus losing their identity. The author has the respondent act by being prepared to die rather than apostasize. The situation is resolved, not by the conversion of the challenger (as in Dan.3 and 6), but with their death (6.17-18; 38.4).<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> In terms of the sociology of deviance this is the *neutralization* strategy in which the condemner is



The MT account of the Aqedah was observed and it was seen that it was represented in various ways in later Jewish literature. Isaac is presented as a suffering hero in tradition relevant to the NT. Seven separate traditions of varying dates were observed: Jubilees, 4Q225, Pseudo-Philo, Philo, 4 Maccabees, Josephus and the Targums.

Moses may have been understood by some first century writers as one who atoned for the people through being prepared to suffer or die, but there is no certainty. There is little evidence that Moses suffered a violent death. Still, both in the OT and in later tradition, he was disbelieved, mocked, attacked and almost stoned. The presentation, therefore, of Moses as a special prophet is secure at an early stage of the tradition and there would be much material for later exegetes, as in *b.Sota* 14a, to use (Num.12.6-8; cf. Ex.33.9-11 ).

The oppression of the righteous by sinners is a prime fact of life in the Epistle of Enoch.<sup>131</sup> In some cases, oppression led to death (99.15; 100.7; 103. 15). God will vindicate the righteous (94.9; 96.8; 97.3, 5; 98.8, 10; 99.15; 100.4; 104.5). This tradition is one that does not see the death of an innocent person bringing about the transformation of the antagonist.

1 Maccabees presents the martyr worldview as significant to the Israelite mind. It is possible that a list of faithful heroes existed which would be cited almost liturgically, as seen in 1 Macc.2.51-68, to reinforce the worldview and maintain social discipline.<sup>132</sup> Mattathias is not martyred but he was prepared to die. Yet martyrdom was not the

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condemned (see Malina & Neyrey, [1991], 109).

<sup>131</sup> Nickelsburg, (1972) 113.

<sup>132</sup> See also Sir. 44.1-50.21; Wis. 10.1ff; 4 Macc.16.20ff; 18.11ff; CD 2.16f; Heb.11.

ideal to pursue, it was the death of the challenger that was sought, and martyrdom would come in the battle fields. 2 Maccabees 7 presents a classic martyr narrative. The martyrs are those who suffer for their own people, the punishment of the antagonists is hoped for rather than their transformation, although their acts of obedience impress the antagonist.

Wisdom of Solomon is antagonistic to Graeco-Roman culture and ideas and uses its knowledge of such tradition to attack it. It is rooted in biblical tradition for its ideas. It critiques abuse of the poor and all compromise and participation in idolatry. It hopes for the destruction of the wicked and the resurrection of those who have died as a result of their obedience to God.

Testament of Moses points to the concern of Jewish writers to connect the writer's own situation with the history of Israel. Distinctive to such a history is the suffering that the nation has experienced arising from the breaking of the covenant, especially in the abuse of the poor. Even the faithful will suffer as a consequence of the nation's sin. In the text is a connection between martyrdom and salvation. Martyrdom is necessary because it will ensure the coming of God's kingdom and bring about the end of suffering for the people of Israel. It represents more the idea of God avenging the wicked rather than any act of faithfulness which might bring about the transformation of the wicked.

In 1QS 8.3ff is a connection between suffering and atonement. Through suffering atonement can be made for the land of Israel and for the faithful. Such suffering will also bring about God's vengeance upon the wicked.

In 1QH 17.6-8, 23-7 the poet laments suffering in a way reminiscent of the suffering figure of Is.53. His suffering illuminates many. There is no vicarious suffering

component. The text is evidence that resurrection was the hope of the Essenes.

In 4Q540/541 = 4QA<sub>h</sub>A is early evidence regarding a key figure who teaches the nations and is rejected. It would seem that the figure will be a blessing to many.

#### 4. *Conclusions*

In the previous chapter seven key points were concluded: The OT provides evidence of those who as God's middlemen:

- i. proclaimed God's word to all opposed to God.
- ii. suffered as witnesses.
- iii. showed total willingness to die for their belief in the one God of Israel.
- iv. died or took upon themselves another's suffering or death.
- v. were ready to suffer and die for their beliefs. Such acts have a transforming impact on the antagonist as well as on their own community. The pivotal values of shame and honour elucidate this inasmuch as by readiness to die the potential martyr gains honour and reinforces the truth claims of his community, it also provides an example that by not being ready die one becomes a shameful person - thus reinforcing *social control theory*.
- vi. will be redeemed inasmuch as the oppressor will be held accountable.
- vii. although concerned with Israel, still were witnesses to the nations.

In this chapter it has been observed that a considerable amount of Jewish literature is antagonistic to oppression and foreign powers. It is rooted in biblical traditions of

expecting to suffer and be rejected by one's own people for speaking or acting in accordance to what they perceive to be God's will (points 1, 2, 3, 4). Some literature hopes that through suffering God will be moved to vindicate his people by punishing the antagonist (point 6). The suffering and readiness to die for one's beliefs also is an act of gaining honour before one's antagonist and not appearing a shameful person before one's own people. One suffers in the hope of keeping alive the traditions of one's ancestors and strengthening those very traditions. The hope is totally nationalistic and there is little evidence of any idea that suffering was intended to transform the antagonistic in the way that Gandhi thought of martyrdom; rather their punishment was expected (point 7). However, the idea of gaining honour is significant in that readiness to die for one's beliefs would have the effect of proving the truth claims of that for which one is ready to die. Indeed, in 2 Macc.7.12 (cf. 4 Macc.18.3) the king is said to marvel at the martyr's courage (point 5).

There appeared to be a change of emphasis between the OT and Jewish developments. Particularly pertinent is the move towards the idea of the act of martyrdom prompting God to avenge the martyr. There is no example of the Gandhian martyr *ideal*. Martyrdom is aimed at bringing about God's day of judgement, which is more about punishing the antagonist than about a transforming effect of the martyrdom. However, this latter component is not totally missing; the transforming effect is present and it is not beyond the realms of possibility that the antagonist may indeed be so impressed by the witness to Yahweh that a transformation may occur. In terms of Gandhian thought, it is difficult to see that Gandhi would appreciate the increased interest in the OT component of vengeance.

## Chapter 5

### DOMITIAN'S REIGN

John does not simply respond to his particular situation, but rather responds to the way he reads and defines the situation in terms of what he expects from the situation.<sup>1</sup> This thesis is indebted to the work of *sociology of knowledge* which rejects the idea that thought occurs in isolation from the social context. It attempts to draw the line from the thought of the thinker to the social world.<sup>2</sup> Malina points out that in terms of the *conflict model*, interpretation and development and readjustment of a person's ideology in facing new and shifting situations will occur. Social groups change to protect and develop their members so that they may achieve their goals and assert their interests within a societal context of conflict.<sup>3</sup>

Most scholars agree that Revelation was written in the latter period of Domitian's reign, as documented by Irenaeus (*Adv. Haer.* 5.30.3).<sup>4</sup> The main argument against this dating is the paucity of evidence for a widespread persecution in this period, and that Revelation seems, it is argued by some, to require a full-scale persecution setting. However, the important point is how an author or group perceives the situation. Still, the particular social setting is important, and it will be seen that there is nothing in

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<sup>1</sup> Malina, (1983) 21-22. Malina uses a symbolic interactionist model to express this phenomenon in which human behaviour is organised around meanings inherited in the tradition.

<sup>2</sup> Berger, (1986) 129.

<sup>3</sup> Malina, (1983) 20 also of the symbolic interactionist model p.22.

<sup>4</sup> The majority of scholars support this dating; Yarbrow Collins, (1981) 33-45 provides a defence; *pace* Bell, (1979) 93-102. The main argument against Domitian's reign is that there is little evidence of a persecution. See also Robinson, (1976) 221-253 but especially 232-233.

Domitian's reign that significantly argues against the dating of Revelation to the period suggested by Irenaeus.

### 1. *Reliability of Sources*

The question of the historical Domitian is debated due to the questionable historicity of the sources for his life.<sup>5</sup> The general opinion accepts that Domitian was a tyrant, and that this affected all around him. Along with this goes the acceptance of the historicity of some kind of persecution against churches under Domitian. This general opinion can no longer be accepted *a priori* due to the work of L.L.Thompson and Jones who argue that there is no clear evidence for a persecution or that Domitian was a tyrant.<sup>6</sup> The starting point for this discussion is Suetonius's *The Twelve Caesars*. Certain criteria should be observed in assessing Suetonius' reliability:<sup>7</sup>

a. *Control of reliable sources regarding the reign of Domitian.* Suetonius was born c. 70CE, 11 years before Domitian came to the throne, and he wrote sometime after Domitian's reign. Therefore, Suetonius would have been in his 20s when Domitian was assassinated in 96CE. Baldwin confirms that Suetonius 'lived through whereof he

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<sup>5</sup> Thompson, (1990) 97 provides a useful summary of the source material for his life

<sup>6</sup> As well as these scholars, earlier scholars were also sceptical about a persecution during Domitian's reign; Henderson, (1927) 45 admits that there might have been a persecution, but if there was, it was very short lived; Merrill, (1945) 154-164: no persecution; also Krodell, (1989) 35-39; Wall, (1991) 10-12.

<sup>7</sup> It must be said that most classical historians generally accept the reliability of Suetonius: Ektor, (1980) 317-326; Baldwin, (1983); Wallace-Hadrill, (1983); Grant, (1970, 79 and 94), Carradice, (1993) to name but a few, and that L.L.Thompson is one of a few who question it.

writes; thus he is as much or as little to be believed as Pliny, Plutarch, Tacitus, Martial or Juvenal'.<sup>8</sup> Thompson wishes to reconstruct Domitian's reign, on the basis of particular writers who wrote during the period of Domitian. It is difficult to understand why someone writing during the period should be more reliable.<sup>9</sup> Rather, it is likely, they had more constraints upon them.<sup>10</sup> Kennedy suggests, for example, that Quintilian, writing during Domitian's reign retired early because Domitian was exerting too much pressure on him to write eulogies.<sup>11</sup>

b. *Is there evidence for both negative and positive presentations of Domitian? Does Suetonius avoid giving his own opinion on events vis-à-vis Domitian's reign?*

Suetonius provides information both for and against Domitian. Grant observes that Suetonius gathers together information both for and against the respective Caesars.<sup>12</sup>

This point of Grant's is illustrated well:

'Some of Domitian's campaigns were unprovoked, others necessary' (*Dom.6*)

This illustrates Grant's point that Suetonius wrote usually without any personal judgement in one direction or the other.<sup>13</sup> *Dom.6* challenges Thompson's understanding that Suetonius speaks with a negative voice *vis-à-vis* Domitian's military successes. The impartial nature of Suetonius is clear, unlike those writing during Domitian's reign, who, Thompson notes, sing the praises of his military

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<sup>8</sup> Baldwin, (1983) 296.

<sup>9</sup> Thompson, (1990) 103. For a rejection of Thompson see Strand, (1991).

<sup>10</sup> Wells, (1984) 180.

<sup>11</sup> Kennedy, (1969) 26.

<sup>12</sup> Grant, (1989) 8; Jones, (1996) xiv-xv.

<sup>13</sup> Grant, (1989) 8.

successes and upon whom Thompson so depends.<sup>14</sup> Baldwin writes:

‘Tacitus and Pliny, followed by Dio, retail indignant accusations of sham wars and fake triumphs. The grinding of axes in both Tacitus and Pliny is so loud as to be self-evident. There is none of this nonsense in Suetonius . . . . A far cry from the rabid sarcasms of Pliny and Tacitus. Suetonius is echoing the favourable and often forgotten tributes to Domitianic military exploits’.<sup>15</sup>

Yet Yarbrow Collins and Thompson argue that Suetonius wrote to portray Domitian badly in order to please Trajan.<sup>16</sup> This argument is difficult to sustain in the case of Suetonius for he often writes positively of Domitian, as well as negatively (as with the other Caesars). For example, in *Dom.5* it is said that Domitian restored a great many buildings that were gutted. *Dom.7* reports that Domitian made a number of social innovations which can be seen to benefit society. *Dom.8.2* reports that such honesty among provincial governors and city magistrates has never since been seen. This is hardly a way to portray someone badly and, moreover, 8.2 actually suggests that the situation in Domitian’s time was better than in Trajan’s *vis-à-vis* the handling of administration. Therefore, that Suetonius wrote to portray Domitian negatively for the purpose of heightening Trajan cannot really be sustained.

In the following chapter Suetonius writes:

While still young, Domitian hated the idea of bloodshed . . . and drafted an edict forbidding the sacrifice of oxen. No one thought of him as in the least greedy or mean either before, or

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<sup>14</sup> Thompson, (1990) 103.

<sup>15</sup> Baldwin, (1983) 299.

<sup>16</sup> Thompson, (1990) 114; Yarbrow Collins, (1984b) 72. The question needs to be asked why Suetonius did not write Trajan’s biography?



some years after, his accession - in fact, he gave conspicuous signs of self-restraint and even of generosity, treating all his friends with great consideration . . . (*Dom.*9)

*c. Is there a tendency to avoid building up the characteristics of Domitian into a coherent picture?* Grant observes that Suetonius avoids building up his characters into coherent pictures.<sup>17</sup> Suetonius writes of the deterioration in Domitian's character:

'His leniency and self-restraint were not, however, destined to continue long, and the cruel streak in him became apparent ' (*Dom.*10)

However, this needs to be compared with *Dom.*3:

'At the beginning of his reign Domitian would spend hours alone every day doing nothing but catch flies and stabbing them with a needle-sharp pen'

This illustrates Grant's point. Suetonius does not attempt to harmonise his account of Domitian in order to present a coherent picture of Domitian. Also, the presentation of a man who hates bloodshed, yet is prepared to carry out wars does not cohere. Today most are aware of the subjective nature of journalism and the writing of history. So often the writer in control of an account feels the need to fill in the gaps and produce a more coherent picture of events for that is what the reader expects. However, the most accurate accounts of events in life are not necessarily coherent, since people are neither always consistent nor always coherent! This must be kept in mind in reconstructing the nature of Domitian's life.

*Dom.* 3 presents some comment on the reasons for Domitian's decline:

'it was lack of funds that made him greedy, and fear of assassination that made him cruel'.

It is not easy to talk about the early, noble, Domitian and the later, tyrannical, Domitian. The seeds of tyranny are sown from an early age, and the most noble can

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<sup>17</sup> Grant, (1989) 8.

become the most tyrannical. This is especially the case with a leader of an empire, one whose aims once noble deteriorate with continual failure and lead such a person to despotism. Suetonius is not blaming the emperor. If anything, he may be showing hints of compassion. He tried hard but continual failure led to a decline in his psychological state. This decline is given an historical base by some scholars in the uprising of Saturninus. Kennedy writes: 'At the beginning of AD 89, he [Domitian] had an experience from which he never totally recovered: a dangerous revolt by Saturninus, who was in command of the army in Germany. The revolt was put down, but it aroused in the emperor feelings of suspicion and insecurity which lasted until his assassination in 96'.<sup>18</sup>

d. *Conclusion.* Suetonius lived and worked in Rome and was aware of the various intrigues and goings on during the reign of Domitian and, moreover, on one occurrence, provided his own eyewitness account of an incident during Domitian's reign (*Dom.* 12). Domitian is portrayed both negatively and positively and, moreover, it is clear that Suetonius avoids giving his own opinion on the events. It can be established that Suetonius is a reliable source for Domitian's life.

## *2. Domitian's attitude and handling of the Provinces*

Domitian was exposed to the pressure of leading an empire which resulted in great extremes of behaviour. The evidence suggests that he set out to achieve good, but even in the early days he appeared to show tendencies to melancholy and paranoia.

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<sup>18</sup> Kennedy, (1969) 26; also, Carson, (1990) 30; for the revolt of Saturninus see Dio Cassius's *RH* 65.2.2,1.

Increasing pressure from those who thought they could do a better job, and a lack of money, caused Domitian to drift towards despotism. However, his clever handling of many events never deserted him, even in his attempts to put down usurpers or perceived usurpers to his throne.

Domitian was an able man who restored many important buildings (*Dom.5*); Domitian cancelled the public grain issue (*Dom.7*). This could be linked to Thompson's discussion of a grain scarcity in which Domitian took measures to deal with the high price of grain.<sup>19</sup> Related to this may be Domitian's measures against the planting of vines in Italy (*Dom.7*) although according to Suetonius he took no measures to implement the edict. This should not necessarily be read as a criticism of Domitian, more likely, it is a passing remark. What leader would be able to impose a means of preventing the flow of alcohol? To have done so would mean being ruthless and result in more serious problems. However, *Dom.7* illustrates that Domitian was aware of what was happening and was prepared to issue edicts for the benefit of his citizens. The fact that he did not impose it may be read positively inasmuch as he had the good sense to leave well alone.<sup>20</sup>

In *Dom.8* it is said that Domitian was conscientious in dispensing justice. 8.2 points to Domitian's administrative skill:

'[Domitian] kept such a tight hold on the city magistrates and provincial governors that the general standard of honesty and justice rose to an unprecedented high level - you need only

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<sup>19</sup> Thompson, (1990) 165.

<sup>20</sup> For further discussion see Court, (1979) 59-60; Wells, (1984) 181-182; Thompson, (1990) 165; Sweet, (1979) 140; Kraybill, (1996) 147-148. .

observe how many such personages have been charged with every kind of corruption since his time' (*Dom.* 8.2)<sup>21</sup>

There seems little reason to question the accuracy of Suetonius's praise although this has been done.<sup>22</sup> Wells and Jones point out that, in the main, the function of the governor was control of the army rather than the administration of justice or the supervision of tax collections. However, Jones believes that this was not the case during Domitian's reign. He writes:

'in view of Domitian's fondness for the minutiae of administration coupled with his suspicious nature, it would not be surprising if both imperial and local administrators were comparatively honest (or rather if they avoided blatant dishonesty), the former from fear of detection, the latter through hope of promotion as well'.<sup>23</sup>

Jones argues his point also on the basis that many innovations occurred in the provinces during Domitian's reign, including building projects and changes in the way that the provinces are organized. He observes incidents which reveal Domitian

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<sup>21</sup> This illustrates how unaware of Suetonius Thompson is. The text illustrates the points he is wishing to make in his discussion of *Domitian and the Provinces* (pp.164-167); also Bell, (1979).

<sup>22</sup> See Jones, (1992) 109 for discussion. Jones argues that Suetonius's knowledge of the event was drawn from the time when he was Hadrian's *ab epistulis*.

<sup>23</sup> Wells, (1984) 145; Jones, (1992) 110. See also Swete, (1922) xciii; Caird, (1984) 22-23, he observes that the governor in the provinces was entrusted with full powers which enabled him to make his own rules and assess his own penalties. On the evidence of Trajan's reply to Pliny's letter about the Christians (Pliny, *Ep*, x.97), the only restriction on the governor was that he could not initiate procedure, there must be an accuser (*delator*); Price, (1984) 2, and 43-44, Price realises the limitations of the Roman governor and states that in many cases the cities continued to organise themselves (p. 2).

autocratically instructing the procurator of Syria; Jones suggests that Domitian was involved in the issuing of a decree in 85 which prevented local officials of Acmonia in Phrygia from embezzling the endowments of wealthy provincials to their native city. Pleket observes, that according to Pliny, after Domitian's death the provincial governors started extorting money from the provincials (2.11, 12; 3.9; 4.9; 5.20; 6.5, 13; 7.6, 10). Pleket comments that this could never have happened during Domitian's reign.<sup>24</sup> Domitian also assisted in settling disputes. For example, he autocratically ordered that the ancient games of Pythia be maintained according to the ancient manner.<sup>25</sup> Domitian, therefore, was very shrewd. This, in many cases, worked for the better, except for those he distrusted. Starr puts it well as regards the rich and powerful: 'one root of Domitian's difficulties with the Senate was his effort to check senatorial abuses in the provinces'.<sup>26</sup>

*Evidence of Unrest in the Provinces.* Thompson argues against the consensus that there was extreme poverty and extreme wealth in Asia Minor, and he offers a picture of a society at peace where the poor could influence policy. However, MacMullen points to the evidence that in nearly every major city of the Roman Empire there were incidents of ordinary members of the community picking up cobbles, broken tiles, and rocks in order to throw at the rich, especially in times of hunger.<sup>27</sup> Garnsey and Saller point to the priority that the emperor placed upon Rome and its need; so in a time of

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<sup>24</sup> Pleket, (1961) 301.

<sup>25</sup> Jones, (1992) 109-114.

<sup>26</sup> Starr, (1982) 75; Wells, (1984) 18: 'the people of the empire had much to thank him for, even though the Senate feared him and hated him'; see also Rogers, (1984) 71.

<sup>27</sup> MacMullen, (1974) 66.

famine, Rome's needs would come first.<sup>28</sup> This would result in anger among the poor towards Rome. The basis of Thompson's objection to a situation of terror during Domitian's reign is the lack of evidence for social unrest. He admits that there is evidence of Dio Chrysostom and Plutarch but dismisses its significance.<sup>29</sup> Yet it is significant, as most scholars admit.<sup>30</sup> In the forty-sixth discourse of Dio Chrysostom it is reported that there was a riot in north-western Asia Minor. The cause of this riot was connected with an increase in the price of grain.<sup>31</sup> Thompson argues that the poor were well looked after on the basis that Dio gives in to them.<sup>32</sup> Still, it took mob violence to sort the problem out. There appears to be no negotiating system by which the poor could challenge the abuses of the rich in a lawful way. This incident is usually dated to the latter part of Vespasian's reign, but it does show the tensions that prevailed in Asia Minor. Domitian would be only too aware of the potential for violence and this awareness may have led to his concern regarding the failure of the grain harvest. Such concern was well measured for he knew the potential for mob violence and resentment against Rome and its representatives and may account for the provincial praise of Domitian in *Sib. Or.* 12.124-142 in which Domitian is praised as a good emperor.<sup>33</sup> This text is dated in 235 CE (see 12.288). It seems difficult to establish why a Jew would praise Domitian at such a late date unless there was a tradition that he aided the provinces, which is corroborated in *Dom.* 8. Therefore,

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<sup>28</sup> Garnsey & Saller, (1987) 99.

<sup>29</sup> Thompson, (1990) 156.

<sup>30</sup> Rostovtzeff, (1926) 111; MacMullen, (1967) 183-184; Yarbrow Collins, (1984b) 94.

<sup>31</sup> Yarbrow Collins, (1984b) 96.

<sup>32</sup> Thompson, (1990) 156.

<sup>33</sup> See Thompson, (1990) 137; Kraybill, (1996) 35;

there is evidence of unrest, which supports the view that there was poverty among the provinces. However, it might be argued that Domitian would do his best to control the situation so as to avoid economic instability.

### 3. *Evidence of Persecution*

It is sometimes commented that classical historians reject a persecution on the basis of Roman documentation and that Christian scholars argue for one on the basis of Revelation.<sup>34</sup> However, this is not correct. Swete was well aware of the lack of evidence and provided reasons for this absence as well as arguing for a persecution, not on the basis of Revelation, but on his study of 1 Clement, Suetonius and Dio Cassius.<sup>35</sup> Beckwith argued for a persecution on the basis of Suetonius and Dio Cassius.<sup>36</sup> Caird drew upon Pliny's letter to Trajan (c. 112 CE) as evidence.<sup>37</sup> Frend, Hemer, Sweet and Roloff also show arguments for a persecution not on the grounds of Revelation alone, but on the basis of Suetonius and other relevant sources.

#### a. *Fiscus Judaicus*.

There have been various conclusions reached by scholars on aspects of Suetonius's report regarding Domitian's Jewish tax policy (*Dom.* 12.1), such as issues relating to the identities of the groups and the different emphases placed on certain aspects, for example, the tax as a need to make money, or as a fee of exemption. Such problems

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<sup>34</sup> Barnard, (1963-1964) 251; Slater, (1998) 233. This is not correct *vis-à-vis* Classical scholars, for example, see Grant, Wells, Wachter and Starr.

<sup>35</sup> Swete, (1922) lxxviii-xciii.

<sup>36</sup> Beckwith, (1919) 204.

<sup>37</sup> Caird, (1984) 20.

need facing before a conclusion can be reached as to how the events referred to would impinge, if at all, upon church members living in Asia Minor. Oakman notes the extraction of taxes in the Roman Empire was aimed at draining the provinces in order to supply the city of Rome and its imperial bureaucracy.<sup>38</sup> It is clearly an act by an Empire to offend the honour of the defeated group or people.

*‘praeter ceteros Iudaicus fiscus acerbissime actus est; ad quem deferebantur qui vel improfessi Iudaicam viverent vitam vel dissimulata origine imposita genti tributa non pependissent’ (Dom. 12.2).*

Apart from the other treasuries, the Jewish tax was administered very severely *vis-à-vis* those who had been accused/indicted (*deferebantur*) either (*vel*) of not professing Judaism but living a Jewish life, or (*vel*), their origins being dissembled, did not pay (*non pependissent*) the tax (*tributa*) imposed upon the nation (*genti*) (own translation).

*The imposita genti tributa.* This refers to Vespasian’s imposition of the tax.<sup>39</sup> According to Dio this tax was imposed only on practising Jews during Vespasian’s reign.<sup>40</sup> Further, Wallace on the basis of Egyptian documents suggests that Vespasian taxed women, slaves and children.<sup>41</sup> Consequently, the evidence suggests that those who publicly confessed and lived a Jewish life would be liable. Josephus reports that Vespasian made all Jews, wherever they lived, liable to the tax. He also suggests that the money would be paid to the Capitoline temple (*War* 7.218).<sup>42</sup> This might support

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<sup>38</sup> Oakman, (1993) 13.

<sup>39</sup> Thompson, (1982) 332; Barclay, (1996) 310.

<sup>40</sup> Dio Cassius, *RH.* 66.7.2

<sup>41</sup> Wallace, (1938) 170ff; Jones, (1996) 103; Barclay, (1996) 76-78.

<sup>42</sup> Barclay, (1996) 76 seems to miss this point drawing significance from the fact that Josephus does not mention it.



the view that Jews were allowed to practise their religion if they paid the money.

Dio provides evidence for why the tax was introduced:

‘From this time forth it was ordered that Jews who continued to observe their ancestral customs should pay an annual tribute of two denarii to Jupiter Capitolinus’ (*RH.* 65.7.2)<sup>43</sup>

*Domitian’s administration of the tax.* Smallwood suggests that an extension of the *genti tributa* was established under Domitian to those not previously liable.<sup>44</sup> This is argued *a fortiori* by the inscription from the period of Nerva, Domitian’s successor. It suggests that Nerva took the following measures: ‘FISCI IUDAICI CALUMNIA SUBLATA’.<sup>45</sup> This suggests that measures were taken to remove (*sublata*) the false accusation (*calumnia*) of being liable to the *fiscus Iudaicus*. It appears that Domitian’s reforming policy, to glean taxes from groups not previously liable, had given rise to false accusations being made against those who really were not liable to the tax, or were liable on the slenderest and most technical grounds. Goodman comments:

‘gentiles in Rome had taken up Jewish practices without considering themselves, or being considered, Jews: the sabbath was widely observed, avoidance of certain meats would implicate vegetarians such as Pythagoreans, many gentiles might attend synagogues out of curiosity, even circumcision could be endured for non-Jewish reasons’.<sup>46</sup>

This corroborates Suetonius’s account that Domitian administered the tax

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<sup>43</sup> So accepted by Smallwood, (1956) 3; Barclay (1996) 76.

<sup>44</sup> Smallwood, (1956) 4; Williams, (1990), argues that it is simply a clamp down on those who are evading it.

<sup>45</sup> Literal translation: ‘the false accusation of the Jewish tax removed’.

<sup>46</sup> Goodman, (1989) 41.

*acerbissime*. It may be that *acerbissime*, for Suetonius, refers to the fact that the tax established by Vespasian became a serious issue, and that whereas before it had been collected with little vigour, now Domitian demanded it be collected *acerbissime* (i.e. with severity and rigour). This rigour is illustrated in the example of the ninety-year old man who is inspected to see if he was circumcised. In this report it is clear that the tax had already been extended to the two groups (who the groups are is discussed below), and circumcision itself, independent of whether a person was living or professing Judaism, made one liable.

*Accusations against the Groups.* Suetonius observes two types of people who did not pay the *genti tributa* established by Vespasian.: 1) *improfessi Iudaicam viverent vitam*, 2) *dissimulata origine*. It is not suggested in the text that the groups were intentionally evading it through their *improfessi* and *dissimulata*, although this is a possibility; rather, because of their *improfessi* and *dissimulata* they were not liable to the tax and, therefore, did not pay it.<sup>47</sup> However, it seems that the groups not paying the tax were a source of discussion which resulted in them being accused (*deferebantur*) of *improfessi* and *dissimulata* in order not to pay the *genti tributa*. The rigour with which Suetonius reports that the administration of the tax was applied during Domitian's reign connects Domitian's concern to appear a strong leader to his subjects. This rigour implies that Domitian reformed the tax to embrace groups whom, he, and many

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<sup>47</sup> So supporting Smallwood against Williams.

others, felt should be paying it.<sup>48</sup> Thompson adds: 'his policy of rigor merely fits with Domitian's general administrative principles of rationality and consistency'.<sup>49</sup>

*First Group.* This group is described as *improfessi Iudaicam viverent vitam*. It was those who did not declare publicly to live, or profess (*profiteor*) Judaism, however, they still lived a Jewish life. By living the life of a Jew, it was clear that they could be seen to practise some aspect or aspects of Judaism. Prominent aspects would be the keeping of the sabbath, food laws, reading of the scriptures, synagogue attendance and monotheistic belief. There were many in Asia Minor who did, and they would, therefore, have been prominent to the pagans of Asia Minor. However, Suetonius distinguishes them as they that *improfessi Iudaicam*. There are two possible understandings of this: A) they had kept their Jewish life a secret, i.e., they did not make a public spectacle of being Jewish, and in the eyes of the authorities were not formal Jews; B) they had not made a public confession of the fact that they were Jews, that is, become fully fledged Jews by being circumcised, thus, they were not in synagogue membership

The next stage is to apply these meanings to *viverent vitam*. If they were Jews and they wanted to keep it a secret, it is clear that in doing so they sought by *improfessi* to evade paying the tax. They would conceal the fact that they did not eat pork, did not participate in the imperial cult, or keep the sabbath. It is hard to foresee a setting in

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<sup>48</sup> To this extent my position aligns with Williams inasmuch as the tax is a clamp down on those who are evading it. But they are evading it legally, and so the base of the tax needed to be extended to make them liable (so Smallwood).

<sup>49</sup> Thompson, (1990) 134.

which such individuals would be able to conceal their Jewishness. Trebilco's work has shown that Jews fitted well into society and adopted many pagan customs, including the use of Greek names which might suggest that they were not so distinguishable.<sup>50</sup> Still, it is hard to see how a Jew would be able to conceal his Jewishness. The only possible scenario is that they met secretly in each others' houses, and bought kosher from secret butchers or were vegetarian for the sake of practicality. Yet there remains the sabbath and Jewish religious festivals. Consequently, identifying the *improfessi Iudaicam viverent vitam* as those living the Jewish life, but who had not made a full commitment to Judaism (B), seems the most plausible reading.<sup>51</sup> If this is the case, a test case can be established to show how, in the eyes of the authorities, not making a public confession of Judaism was connected with *non pependissent*. The groups and individuals, in the eyes of the authorities, were seen as those who lived the Jewish life; yet, in order to avoid paying the *tributa*, they refused circumcision (*improfessi*) which meant that they would not fall into that category needing to notify the authorities that they were Jews. The authorities felt themselves cheated on a technicality in the law which allowed them only to tax fully signed up, synagogue attending, practising Jews. It could be argued that there would be other reasons for not being circumcised; for example, circumcision would be abhorrent to many Gentiles and painful; secondly, some might object to being circumcised on theological grounds because they did not believe in synagogue Judaism, for example, gentile church members. It could be argued that church and synagogue members were separate groups in the eyes of the

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<sup>50</sup> Trebilco, (1991) 35, 174.

<sup>51</sup> So Smallwood, (1956) 1-13; Barclay, (1996) 311 *pace* Thompson, (1982) 329-342 rejects the idea that Gentiles who had taken up Jewish practices were in the mind of Suetonius. Ethnic apostate Jews

Romans by the end of the first century but this is unlikely; both were clearly seen as of the same stock.<sup>52</sup> However, in the eyes of the authorities, the various reasons for people not being circumcised were irrelevant, they were simply seen as a group who had escaped the tax on a technicality in the wording of the law. This suggestion is argued *a fortiori* in the light of Dio (*RH.* 65.7.2 see above for quote). Dio provides evidence that the tax acted as a fee exempting the payee from participation in emperor-cult activities. This evidence provides the *raison d'être* for the *genti tributa*, viz., a sign of loyalty and subjugation to Rome and its gods. Barclay comments that the tax was a public humiliation as well as an increasing financial burden.<sup>53</sup> He points out that Josephus carefully omits to mention that the money from the tax was used for the temple of Jupiter. This would suggest that Josephus was aware how humiliating this would be, and therefore failed to mention where the money went.<sup>54</sup> Consequently, some were neither paying the tax, nor participating in the emperor-cult. Domitian, with his suspicious nature and administrative acumen, would not allow this to continue. In extending the wording of the law to embrace this group, he would solve the problem of needing to deal with a large number of people who were opting out of the emperor-cult without paying the fee of exemption. This would satisfy the populace who would be quick to inform (*deferebantur*) against such groups, as Suetonius seems to suggest. This understanding avoids the problem of why anyone would evade paying the tax if it

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were in mind.

<sup>52</sup> Lieu, (1996) 12 'Pagan writers who still confused the two religions may have been representative of some popular perception even among adherents of the two religions'.

<sup>53</sup> Barclay, (1996) 310; Smallwood (1956) 3, comments that in effect Jews purchased the right to worship Yahweh by subscription to Jupiter. See also Oakman, (1993) 13.

<sup>54</sup> Barclay, (1996) 76. However, as has been seen, Josephus does report that the tax was paid to the

allowed them freedom to practise their Judaism. Also, it allows for the abuses to which the Nerva inscription testifies. Goodman noted that many Gentiles kept personal rules with regards to diet, occasional synagogue attendance, and yet had no wish to be identified as Jews.<sup>55</sup> Such people would be vulnerable to the new reforms. Although many from this group would participate in the emperor-cult, they now found themselves vulnerable on a technicality in the law. This was indeed *calumnia*. Such people would be vulnerable to the more conservative in society who would inform against them. Today's law on child abuse may serve to illustrate the point. Government agencies are rightly concerned to develop laws to detect any abuses committed against children, and so relevant government agencies have to investigate all reported incidences of child abuse and are empowered to act even to the extent of placing a child in care. Even though this can lead to abuses in which false accusations are made, the parents and guardians must still suffer the stigma of being accused, and possibly would have their child taken away. Most would agree that this is an abuse of a good policy.<sup>56</sup>

*The Second Group: concealed their origins (dissimulata origine).* Domitian and those who made the accusations did not do so because the group concealed their circumcision in a literal sense. The setting was that of not registering as Jews when

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Capitoline temple (*War* 7.218) and this would not suggest that Josephus was embarrassed.

<sup>55</sup> Goodman, (1989) 41.

<sup>56</sup> Bredin, (1998) 160-164; Thompson, (1982) 200 also agrees insofar as he states that Nerva rejects the Domitianic interpretation of Vespasian's original decree by declaring that apostate Jews were not required to pay. However, where we disagree is that Thompson argues that Domitian intentionally extended the tax to embrace apostate Jews etc.

Domitian and those who acted as informers felt they should, that is, they were known as ethnic/circumcised Jews and yet had not registered as payees of the *genti tributa*.<sup>57</sup> The *dissimulata*, therefore, would be parallel with the *improfessi* (see above). Both actions were viewed as ways of not registering as *genti tributa* payees. The case of the ninety-year old reported by Suetonius, therefore, was a case in which a man had not registered as a Jew, and was thus humiliated by the inspection that followed Domitian's reform. Smallwood pointed out that three groups would fit those concealing their Jewish origins: A) practising Jews trying to evade payment as an understandable protest against supporting a pagan cult (but she does not consider that there would be many from this group due to their practices being so clearly observable); B) apostates; C) Jewish Christians who felt themselves exempt from a specifically Jewish tax. The Jewish Christians would, also, be apostates in the eyes of the synagogue and were certainly considered by pagan writers in the second century as apostate Jews.<sup>58</sup> It is possible, therefore, to distinguish two groups of apostates: those who would willingly participate in the emperor-cult; those who would not participate, i.e. Jewish Christians. Non-Christian apostates would be totally in favour of Graeco-Roman culture and, consequently, would have no problems in participating in the life of a pagan culture. This leads to the question: why impose the tax on them if they participate in the emperor cult? Goodman observes that the policy of Rome was to accept the right of ethnic Jews like other people to assimilate into the Roman citizen community or other peregrine communities so long as they gave up their peculiar

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<sup>57</sup> Barclay, (1996) 77 writes that 'tax collectors perhaps relied on lists of members supplied by the synagogues'. This may be the case, but with the extension it should be assumed that people were liable who were not on the synagogue list, such as gentile Christians.



customs.<sup>59</sup> It would appear that Domitian's tax reforms *vis-à-vis* apostates breaks with this policy. It is difficult to appreciate why Domitian imposed the tax on this group as it would not be viewed favourably by many. This is probably another aspect of the tax that fits the Nerva inscription, thus leading Goodman to suggest that Nerva reformed Domitian's tax reform in order to remove such apostate Jews, especially inasmuch as many of them were wealthy, from liability. Such reform he writes 'might be considered by Nerva as a means to court popularity in the city of Rome'.<sup>60</sup> It is possible that Domitian's zeal for the imperial cult led him to glean money from as many as possible. Suetonius also reports that Domitian's new building programmes and increased army pay had exhausted Domitian's resources (*Dom.*12).<sup>61</sup> Carradice writes: 'Possibly because of a growing awareness of impending financial difficulties he perhaps now began the rigorous enforcement and collection of taxes, including the Jewish tax'.<sup>62</sup> Although this suggestion is possible, it seems unlikely that Domitian had this group in mind. There have been two observed motives underlying the reform of the *genti tributa*: i) That it embraces those who are not participating in the emperor-cult; ii) As a way of building up a depleted treasury. Although satisfying point (ii), it is difficult to see why anyone would indict an apostate for not making public their origins in order to pay the tax, when there was no reason why they should pay the tax. It is more likely that apostasy would be encouraged by the authorities. It is possible that the synagogue

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<sup>58</sup> Origen, (*Contra Celsus* 2.4), see also Wilken, (1984) 113.

<sup>59</sup> Goodman, (1989) 41; this is opposed to Thompson (1982).

<sup>60</sup> Goodman, (1989) 41.

<sup>61</sup> See discussion in Carradice, (1983) 165; Jones, (1992) 74.

<sup>62</sup> Carradice, (1983) 165.



might indict an apostate out of vengeance.<sup>63</sup> This would fit with the Nerva inscription and would account for the incident of the inspection of a ninety-year old reported by Suetonius. Yet the *main* group that Domitian would have in mind would be those who were circumcised, ethnic Jews who did not participate in the cult; in addition, they did not pay the tax. The *dissimulata* would indicate that they were perceived by those who laid accusations against them as not being honest about their sympathies to Judaism. The real reasons for this *dissimulata* might be theological, that is, they may have been ethnic Jews, but they had no sympathies to synagogue Judaism, yet still they refused participation in the cult. Another group would be Jews who simply refused to pay the tax because the money was paid towards the rebuilding of the temple of Jupiter and, consequently, did not register as liable for the tax when they were liable. Again this could fit Suetonius's account of the ninety-year old man. Smallwood recognizes two groups who might fit with this.

Firstly, Jewish Christians are clearly Jews by birth and all would have been circumcised. Yet, they also lived a Jewish life without professing synagogue Judaism. They would fit both categories and would, therefore, be liable to the reformed tax. They would be a group who would not want to identify with the Judaism of the synagogue, and so would not wish to identify with them by paying a tax peculiar to them; further, they did not participate in the emperor-cult by supporting it with their money. Secondly, there would be Jews who refused to pay the tax on grounds of conscience. For Smallwood, *dissimulata* refers to Jews concealing living as Jews. Goodman puts it: 'Roman definition of a Jew depended on his or her public

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<sup>63</sup> Goodman, (1989) 41; Barclay, (1996) 77.

declaration of Judaism and acceptance of the burden of the consequent tax'.<sup>64</sup> Therefore, a circumcised Jew could intentionally evade paying the pre-reformed tax by not registering. There would be many Gentiles and maybe some synagogue Jews who would have been unhappy about this, and such people would have informed against those not registering. The authorities did not ask questions as to why people were *improfessi* or *dissimulata*; rather, they simply reformed the system to make more people register and pay. In fact, as Hemer notes, Domitian is not fussy about theological distinctions and categories.<sup>65</sup> He is concerned to make all pay who should pay. The opportunity to pay the tax was a great opportunity for some, but for people who refused to pay on grounds of conscience, it was unfavourable inasmuch as they were now identified as a group who would be expected to pay, they would be placed in a challenge-response situation.

*Conclusion.* Domitian widened the *genti tributa* to embrace groups and individuals who were not previously considered liable. The reformed *genti tributa* would impinge on Jews, and those resembling Jews or identified with Jews, everywhere, including Asia Minor. Suetonius does not say that the reformed tax is being evaded, rather, they are, in the eyes of the authorities, evading the *genti tributa* as established under Vespasian on a technicality in the wording of the law, in the eyes of many intentionally to avoid paying; there was something of a public unease with these groups which resulted in them being indicted (*deferebantur*). Domitian's extension would be viewed

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<sup>64</sup> Goodman, (1989) 44; Barclay, (1996) 77 also make much that the tax served to define identity more easily.

<sup>65</sup> Hemer, (1986) 8.

favourably by many who wished not to participate in the emperor-cult insofar as Domitian's administration was in the position to have them tried for not participating in the emperor-cult. Domitian decided to give such groups a chance to show their loyalty by paying a tax independently of belonging to the synagogue; moreover, Domitian needed money, thus demanding payment from more people would satisfy this.<sup>66</sup> Domitian's policy was effective in dealing with the potentially volatile situation insofar as it separated the loyal from the disloyal. Many would willingly pay the tax, but there would be some who would not.<sup>67</sup> It seems that Domitian had in mind those who were ethnic Jews who did not participate in the emperor-cult. It may be surmised that the system may have been abused by tax paying Jews, who informed against apostate Jews out of vengeance. The most probable groups were Jewish Christians and rebel Jews (further discussion of the Jewish tax and its significance to Revelation will be discussed in chapter 6 section 2).

#### b. *Further Evidence of Persecution*

Eusebius cites Melito, bishop of Sardis c.170 CE:

'Nero and Domitian, also of all [emperors], persuaded by certain malignant persons, desired to bring our doctrine into ill repute; and since their day, by an unreasonable custom, lying information about the Christians has come to be prevalent' (*apud*. Eusebius *HE*,IV.26.9)

It is possible that this text was derived from oral tradition relating to the persecution of

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<sup>66</sup> Carradice, (1983) 165.

<sup>67</sup> It could be argued that no one would willingly pay, but those who wanted to practise their religion unmolested would pay it. They probably ignored (or did not know) that the money was paying for the temple in Rome. All they cared about was being able to live their Jewish life.

church members during Domitian's reign. The text implies that church members suffered at the hands of informers. It is likely that Melito understood some synagogue members to have been among those who slandered church members. This is argued on the basis that Melito had no love of Jews and had blamed Israel for the death of Jesus (*PH* 73-81). This may be illustrated in the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 12.1: the author reports that the Jews were actively involved in the death of Polycarp. It has been seen above that Jews had the policy of maintaining the status quo and, thus, would have distanced themselves from Christians.

Melito had good sources for his knowledge that Domitian persecuted Christians, and his account seems to reflect a knowledge of the details regarding informers which is corroborated elsewhere and there may be some truth to the account.

Eusebius also cites Tertullian:

'Domitian almost equalled Nero in cruelty, but because he had common-sense, he soon stopped what he begun and recalled those he had exiled' (*apud*. Eusebius *HE* 3.20).

Tertullian wrote towards the end of the second century. The text clearly coheres with Melito although it plays down the level of persecution imposed by Domitian. That Domitian exiles those he perceives to be a threat is corroborated by Dio when he reports the fate of Domitilla who was exiled to Pandateria (*RH*.67.14). The possession of common-sense may reflect the shrewdness of the emperor who never instigated a pogrom against church members but, more likely, carried out *ad hoc* acts against individuals and small groups throughout. That he recalled those who had been banished suggests that Tertullian had some example in mind which would indicate the use of a written or oral source. Eusebius cites Hegesippus (2nd cent Church historian) who reports that Domitian ordered that a previously established persecution against

Christians should cease when he concluded after examining certain Christians that they were ‘as simpletons’ (*apud*. Eusebius.*HE* III,20). This may fit the picture of Domitian as one who sought out those who were political threats to his reign and who were in positions to stir up ordinary people.<sup>68</sup> However, the historicity of Hegesippus’s account is dubious and its place in establishing firm conclusions cannot be relied on, for it seems implausible that Domitian himself would question a few church leaders from Palestine, and, moreover, that he would be foolish enough to think that only members of the elite would be a threat to him. He would know too well that it was those who were economically deprived that would be a threat, for they had nothing to lose.<sup>69</sup>

### *c. 1 Clement and Pliny*

1 Clement, written to deal with problems that the Corinthian Christians were having, is a crucial text for some scholars.<sup>70</sup> Swete sees the letter as contemporary with Domitian and believes that 1.1 reflects the nature of Domitian’s actions against Christians when it offers an excuse for the delay in the sending of the epistle:

τὰς αἰφνιδίους καὶ ἐπαλλήλους γενομένας ἡμῖν συμφορὰς καὶ περιπτώσεις

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<sup>68</sup> Barnard, (1963-64) 254, writes: ‘The account falls into line with what we know, from Roman sources, of the character of the Emperor. Christians no more than others would escape if Domitian thought they were a threat to his position. But it is unlikely . . . that he would have instituted a wholesale persecution of Christians simply because of their faith’. Barnard’s comments are fair; however, one needs to take care of separating religion from politics in the way that is done today. For the first century person, the two were interconnected and new sects would be viewed suspiciously; see also Kraybill, (1996) 50-52.

<sup>69</sup> See Bauckham’s discussion, (1990) 90-91.

<sup>70</sup> Swete, (1922) lxxxv; also, Barnard, (1963-64); Keresztes, (1973).

The text expresses one of two possibilities: συμφορὰς καὶ περιπτώσεις could refer to the nature of the persecution. This is the argument defended by Barnard.<sup>71</sup> However, it could refer to a delay due to internal problems within the Church of Rome. Yet it is difficult to see that a letter offering advice about the internal problems within a community would begin by referring to its own internal problems. It would be like a marriage guidance counsellor arriving late to a session with a couple and excusing herself on the grounds that she had just had an irreparable row with her husband! The persecution argument is also strengthened by 7.1 in which the writer refers to those who had previously suffered due to their faithful witness to God:

‘we are in the same lists, and the same contest awaits us’.

There are, therefore, grounds for arguing that 1 *Clement* refers to problems that the Church was experiencing in Rome connected with specific policies of Domitian.

Pliny’s letter to Trajan suggests that church members suffered under Domitian:

‘Others, whose names were given to me by an informer, first admitted the charge and then denied it; they said that they had ceased to be Christians two or more years previously, and some of them even twenty years ago’ (*Ep.* 96).

Caird observes that the letter implies that there had in the past been occasional, though not necessarily frequent, instances of church members being taken to court on criminal charges.<sup>72</sup> What is significant is that Pliny informs Trajan that there were those who had abandoned their faith twenty years before, i.e. in 92CE. The evidence might point to the policies of Domitian as the cause, but there can be no certainty as there might only have been a local outbreak of persecution in Bithynia at that time. However, the

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<sup>71</sup> Barnard, (1963-64) 255-256.

<sup>72</sup> Caird, (1984) 20.

fact that Pliny had no precedent for what to do with church members suggests that there was no persecution of them (see further discussion chapter 6 section 2).<sup>73</sup>

#### 4. Domitian and the Imperial Cult

The Imperial Cult according to Suetonius was endorsed and encouraged, especially, *vis-à-vis* Domitian:

‘Lord and God’ [*dominus et deus*] became his regular title in writing and conversation. Images dedicated to Domitian in the Capitol had to be of either gold or silver, and of a certain weight’ (*Dom.13*).

The reliability of *Dom.13* is questioned as is the significance of imperial cult for Revelation.

*Reliability of Dom.13.* Thompson questions the historicity of Suetonius’s account generally.<sup>74</sup> In terms of *Dom.13* he points to the lack of inscriptions, coins, and medallions to support *Dom.13* and observes that *dominus et deus* is not recorded in the writings of Statius and Quintilian, both commissioned to write by Domitian himself.

a. *Coins.* There can be no disagreement with Thompson’s observation regarding the title *dominus et deus*. Janzen, however, points out the ‘message is clearly communicated in other ways’.<sup>75</sup> These other ways must be observed. Carradice carefully observes c. 211 coin types relating to Domitian’s reign. On the basis of his observations Carradice concludes:

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<sup>73</sup> See discussion in Downing, (1988).

<sup>74</sup> Thompson, (1990) 105.

<sup>75</sup> Janzen, (1994) 655-656.

‘Not only does Domitian himself appear on an unprecedented quantity of designs, but the deities which appear most commonly also had in contemporary legend the most intimate associations with him. Domitian even appears on one reverse type holding a divine attribute (the thunderbolt of Jupiter) and the regular use of the aegis on the obverse portrait adds to the impression that the coinage was being employed to project an ideological message related to the Emperor’s aspirations to divinity’.<sup>76</sup>

He also observes Domitian’s unusual ‘Neronian’ hair style which possibly relates to the promotion of self-apotheosis, like Nero.<sup>77</sup> A brief observation of the data will show clearly that Carradice’s conclusion is corroborated by the evidence.

During Domitian’s reign several unprecedented developments in coinage issues occurred which led to an understanding of an emperor who aspired towards divinity.<sup>78</sup> The ‘present’ divinity of Domitian’s family is reflected on those issues where his wife (Domitia) was advertised as the mother of the divine Caesar. These issues refer to the son they had lost as an infant. Janzen comments that this is a new development insofar as they reveal that Domitian had his son consecrated while he was alive. The son is pictured as a baby Jupiter seated on a globe with arms outstretched surrounded by seven stars. Astrological representations such as the globe and stars were not uncommon on coinage, but the appearance of an infant is not common. The general consensus regarding the message of the coin is that the globe was representative of world dominion and power, while stars communicate the divine nature of the figure

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<sup>76</sup> Carradice, (1983) 148.

<sup>77</sup> Carradice, (1993) 170.

<sup>78</sup> Janzen, (1994) 645; Kraybill, (1996) 63,



they surround.<sup>79</sup> It is, therefore, reasonable to conclude, with Janzen, that this particular coin portrays a son of god, and Domitian is clearly the father of the god.<sup>80</sup> Similarly, and more forcefully, this deified status of Domitian can be seen on the ‘Minerva with *fulmen*’ type coins. In some cases Domitian holds the *fulmen* himself thus seizing for himself a divine attribute - the thunderbolt. It is interesting to note the chronology of minting. Janzen points out that it is in 85-86 CE that Jupiter and Domitian share the *fulmen*. However, in the years 87-96 Domitian alone held the *fulmen*, thus leading to the conclusion that Domitian became increasingly hungry for power and deification in the latter years and support the evidence of Suetonius that Domitian became a tyrant in the latter period.<sup>81</sup> Carradice suggests that ‘we might see Domitian himself as Jupiter on earth, holding the thunderbolt’.<sup>82</sup>

b. *Statius and Quintilian*. The title *dominus et deus* does not appear in these works, and, indeed, Statius reports that Domitian rejected the title of *dominus* when acclaimed so at a banquet (*Silvae* I, vi, 82-83). However, Scott, commenting on *Silvae* I.6.82-83, observes that this moderation was of short duration.<sup>83</sup> Moreover, it fits the evidence of Suetonius, so far observed, inasmuch as Suetonius portrays the early Domitian as moderate, but that this was short lived. A brief assessment of Statius’s and Quintilian’s work will confirm this.

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<sup>79</sup> Janzen, (1994) 646.

<sup>80</sup> Janzen, (1994) 647.

<sup>81</sup> Janzen, (1994) 648; See also Carradice, (1983) 144.

<sup>82</sup> Carradice, (1993) 172, he also reminds the reader that Martial and Statius (contemporaries of Domitian) repeatedly refer to him as Jove and Thunderer, p.172 n. 26.

<sup>83</sup> Scott, (1933) 249.

Statius refers obsequiously to Domitian's sacred frame, hallowed feet, and celestial eyes. He depicts Domitian as one like Jove (*Silvae* V, i, 37-38). He writes that Domitian:

'reclines among the stars with Jupiter and receives the immortal wine from the hand of Trojan Ganymede' (*Silvae* IV, ii, 10-12)<sup>84</sup>

Scott points out that *Dominus* itself is used in the description of a banquet in the royal palace. Statius refers to it as *dominica mensa* (the table of the Lord) (*Silvae* IV, ii, 6).<sup>85</sup> Elsewhere Statius refers to the *numen* of Domitian:

'Hail, offspring and sire of mighty deities, whose godhead (*numen*) I heard from afar!' (*Silvae* I, i, 75)

Similarly in his introduction to book 4 he writes to his friend:

'I believe that no work of mine has opened without an invocation of the godhead of our mighty prince [Domitian]'

In the same vein Statius states the divinity quite unambiguously:

'Lo! a god (*deus*) is he, at Jove's command he rules for him the happy world'.

Statius reports that the goddess Minerva wove for Domitian a robe with her own hand (*Silvae* IV, i, 21-22). The implication is that Minerva was understood as the mother of Domitian and Domitian as son of god.

Consequently, the evidence from Statius would not support Thompson's claims. On the contrary, it would indicate the opposite conclusion. It may well be that Statius was indeed a flatterer, as Jones comments.<sup>86</sup> However, that it coheres with other evidence

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<sup>84</sup> Note that this coheres with the above coin evidence of Domitian with the thunderbolt.

<sup>85</sup> Scott, (1933) 250.

<sup>86</sup> Jones (1992) 108: 'The best that an emperor could expect after death was to be declared a *divus*, never a *deus*'. Domitian was in fact attributed with this name. Jones argues that it was due to Statius

would imply that Domitian would not be adverse to such flattery. Moreover, Statius would not have been so excessive if Domitian had been a more moderate man.

A more sober style than that of Statius is met in the writings of Quintilian who, on the whole, pursues a custom of never naming or singing praises of the emperor.<sup>87</sup> There are, however, exceptions in the case of Domitian. Quintilian was aware that Domitian lived in the shadow of his father, Vespasian, and his brother, Titus. Domitian's exclusion from participation in the wars in which his father and brother had been involved was strongly justified by Domitian when he suggests that it was his voluntary choice to withdraw into a life of writing (Tacitus, *Histories* IV, 86). Quintilian breaks his usual custom and comments that what Domitian said was true, thus refuting those who thought him a coward. This would suggest that Domitian was sensitive about this. Consequently, Quintilian and others felt compelled to praise Domitian's poetry, thus corroborating Domitian's account.<sup>88</sup> Kennedy concludes: 'The presence of the reference in the restrained Quintilian would seem to mean that Domitian was very touchy on the subject, and that there was some danger that an informer might accuse Quintilian of slighting the emperor'.<sup>89</sup> This may also account for his early retirement around 90CE. Kennedy suggests that Quintilian's early retirement was linked with a deteriorating situation beginning with Saturninus's revolt in 89CE. In other words, Quintilian was shrewd and saw 90CE as an excellent time to retire.

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being a flatterer. This must be questioned. Suetonius reports that Domitian encouraged the use of the title and Statius provides an example of it being in part attributed to Domitian. *Deus* occurs elsewhere in *Silvae* I, i, 61-2; V, i, 37-38. See also Dio Cassius *RH* 67.13.3-4.

<sup>87</sup> Slater, (1998) 236-237 also notes the significance of Quintilian.

<sup>88</sup> Valerius Flaccus 1.12; Silus Italicus 111, 620; Statius, *Achilleid* 1, 15-16.

<sup>89</sup> Kennedy, (1966) 110.

This brief look at Quintilian does not indicate that Domitian extended the Imperial Cult. It does, however, suggest that Quintilian was unhappy with Domitian, especially towards the end of his reign, and that Quintilian felt pressure to flatter Domitian contrary to his normal policy. This would again indicate the desire of Domitian to be flattered.

c. *Conclusion.* Domitian extended the idea of emperor worship during his reign, especially in the latter part of his reign.

### *The Impact of the Imperial Cult in Asia Minor*

There is sufficient evidence to suggest that the Imperial Cult was popular among the populace in Asia Minor.<sup>90</sup> The nature of the cult was to give honour to Caesar. Price quotes Nicolaus of Damascus's biography of the emperor Augustus as providing a view of the imperial cult:

‘they revere him [Augustus] with temples and sacrifices over islands and continents, organised in cities and provinces, matching the greatness of his virtue and repaying his benefactions towards them’ (*FHG* 90 F 125).<sup>91</sup>

Price observes that the forms of practice of the cult varied from place to place.<sup>92</sup>

Moreover, it was expressed in various forms, *viz.*, through public celebrations,

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<sup>90</sup> The work of Price, (1984), provides the most thorough, up to date study of this subject.

<sup>91</sup> Price, (1984) 1; other literary references to the cult: Philo, *Legatio* 149-151, and Lucian, *Apologia* 13. Price, (1984) 3, comments that this is rare literary evidence describing and explaining the imperial cult. He writes: ‘The silence is not in itself surprising. It is typically outsiders who are provoked to record the basic institutions of a society . . .’.

<sup>92</sup> Price, (1984) 3.

festivals, and special imperial festivals where sacrifices were offered usually by the imperial priests representing the people. However, due to the lack of literary evidence observation of the archaeological evidence is needed.

Imperial temples and sanctuaries were extremely common in over sixty cities in Asia Minor and dedicated to the imperial cult. Price comments that the emperor also received statues in special rooms off the main square of half a dozen cities and buildings.<sup>93</sup> The presence of the emperor is observed even in a less significant city, for example, in Laertes where archaeological work has uncovered seven imperial statue bases. The city also had imperial priests, and boasted a semi-circular monument in honour of the Severans and a Caesareum.

*Ephesus* also testifies to the presence of the cult. Friesen notes particularly that the Imperial Cult in Ephesus became particularly prominent in Domitian's reign.<sup>94</sup> It was adorned with four imperial temples, an Antonine altar, an imperial portico, and four gymnasias were associated with the emperor. Moreover, there is evidence of imperial statues, some of which were found in public buildings and in the streets.<sup>95</sup> The civic centre, the most prominent and prestigious place, reveals the general ethos, which is expressed in the presence of imperial temples and sanctuaries. Within the upper square can be seen a double temple of Roma and Julius Caesar, statues of Augustus and his wife Livia, a temple of Augustus, and a temple of Domitian.<sup>96</sup> Friesen concludes from

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<sup>93</sup> Price, (1984) 135.

<sup>94</sup> Friesen, (1993) 41-49; Kraybill, (1996) 27.

<sup>95</sup> Price, (1984) 137; Friesen, (1993) 41-49; Kraybill, (1996) 64 comments that the huge statue found at Ephesus is the very 'image of the beast' condemned by John.

<sup>96</sup> Price, (1984) 139. Also, (pp.197-198) Price suggests that the dedication of the temple to Domitian and his deified relatives prompted the author of Revelation to write. See also Court, (1994) 100.

his observations of the design of the buildings that it was distinctive to Asia Minor rather than Rome, thus showing the zeal for the cult in Asia Minor.<sup>97</sup>

In *Smyrna*, a temple was dedicated to Tiberius (Tacitus, *Ann.* 4.15) and contained a cult statue of Tiberius in a toga, perhaps with a veiled head (the official dress of the Roman emperor). The veiled head would, according to Price, indicate that the emperor was shown as a priest.<sup>98</sup> However, this should not be surprising as the gods often had their own priesthoods.<sup>99</sup>

*Pergamum*, considered by many to be the capital of Roman Asia, was also a great religious centre which had received a separate temple for the worship of Rome and the emperor.<sup>100</sup> Hemer points out that Augustus in 29 BCE permitted the erection of temples to Roma and himself at Pergamum. The provincial temple at Pergamum is portrayed on many coins of the city.<sup>101</sup>

*Thyatira* is rarely mentioned in ancient literature and its site reveals few signs of its past and it is difficult to say anything with certainty. Hemer ventures to conclude that 'its religion and organisation point to a quest for a syncretistic reconciliation of diverse elements in its population'.<sup>102</sup> The city served an important function in the Roman road system, for it lay on the road from Pergamum to Laodicea. It was also known as a

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Interestingly, Price suggests that the temple of Domitian at Ephesus was rededicated to Vespasian after Domitian's memory was damned, p.178.

<sup>97</sup> Friesen, (1993) 73; Kraybill, (1996) 28.

<sup>98</sup> Price, (1984) 185.

<sup>99</sup> Price, (1984) 185; cf. Dio Cassius 59, 5 on Gaius.

<sup>100</sup> Harris, (1979) 21.

<sup>101</sup> Hemer, (1986) 84; Kraybill, (1996) 60.

<sup>102</sup> Hemer, (1986) 127.

strong manufacturing town and the industries would have been indebted to the imperial cult, for example, dyeing, garment making, and brass-working (note Acts 16.14).<sup>103</sup>

*Sardis* More is known of Sardis and its enthusiasm for the cult. For example, in commemoration of the coming of age of Gaius Caesar, the city decreed a festival and the consecration of a cult statue of Gaius Caesar in Augustus's temple.<sup>104</sup>

*Philadelphia* The city existed in fear of earthquakes. Some writers refer to the generosity of the emperor in providing relief after the great earthquake of 17CE.<sup>105</sup> It is known from the coinage that under Vespasian the city took the imperial epithet 'Flavia' and this continued until Domitian's death.

In *Laodicea* lies a temple dedicated to Domitian with an inscription expressing the desire and importance of military victories.

*Impact of the Cult on the Churches.* Price observes that the nature of the imperial cult troubled church members.<sup>106</sup> Tertullian records that a Christian was rebuked in a dream because his slaves had put wreaths on his gates at the sudden announcement of public rejoicings concerning the emperor (*de Idol* 13-16). There is little evidence reporting any imperial sacrifice. Price comments that the major part of the evidence

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<sup>103</sup> Hemer, (1980) 1210, comments that the city was remarkable for the number of its temples and religious festivals.

<sup>104</sup> Price, (1984) 66, for a detailed list of the evidence see pp.259-260.

<sup>105</sup> Dio Cassius 57.17.8; Strabo 13.4.8.

<sup>106</sup> Price, (1984) 123. Interestingly he comments that Christian resistance to the cult consisted in passive resistance.

comes from inscribed descriptions of and prescriptions for the sacrifices.<sup>107</sup> Price writes that sacrifices were made on a variety of occasions, public and private, by individuals or by the representatives of city or province. The burning of incense, perhaps on altars, or the killing of an animal, normally a bull, were the standard offerings at public festivals. There is evidence to suggest that such sacrifices were made before an imperial statue or temple.<sup>108</sup> Price observes two main categories of sacrifices, *viz.*, sacrifices to the emperor and sacrifices on behalf of the emperor.<sup>109</sup> Most of the evidence points to the latter sacrifice being the most common. However, there is evidence of sacrifices being offered to the emperor.<sup>110</sup> Price points out that church members were unable to make any sacrifice due to that fact that the sacrifice of Christ upon the cross had in principle ruled out the efficacy of any other sacrifices.<sup>111</sup> Moreover, to sacrifice to the emperor or Roman gods would be to imply that the emperor was a god, and that Rome was supreme, and this was unacceptable; even if the sacrifice was not offered to the emperor but on behalf of him, the refusal of church members to do so would have been in the eyes of many as a sign of disrespect, and refusal to give honour to the emperor.

Sweet objects to the significance of the emperor cult: 'Domitian did affect divinity; Domitian indeed required to be addressed as "Lord and God"'. But in actual practice the emperor cult . . . was the preserve of the local aristocracy; the average provincial

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<sup>107</sup> Price, (1984) 208.

<sup>108</sup> Price, (1984) 208-209.

<sup>109</sup> Price, (1984) 209.

<sup>110</sup> Price, (1984) 216.

<sup>111</sup> Price, (1984) 221; Slater, (1998) 245.



had no direct part'.<sup>112</sup> However, Price sees the involvement of all classes. He writes that the involvement of the whole community was expressed by the regulation that householders should sacrifice on altars outside their houses as the procession passed.<sup>113</sup> The processions were aspects of the cult and often a bull was sacrificed at the end of the procession.<sup>114</sup> It is the expectation that all were required to offer sacrifices. Omitting to do this would cause problems for church members.

Finally, it should be observed that the cult also served the function of testing those suspected of disloyalty to the emperor. Such a function did not discriminate on the basis of class. This is illustrated in Pliny's letter to Trajan. Pliny comments that in some cases, in order to test whether a suspected church member had recanted, they were to repeat after him a formula of invocation to the Roman state Gods, and to make offerings of wine and incense to the statue of Trajan, which Pliny reports was brought into the room along with the other images of the gods (*Ep.* 96).

*Conclusion.* The evidence suggests it is likely that all ranks of people participated in the imperial cult. It can be supposed that during the period of Domitian, when there was a development of the cult, a shrewd observer of political developments such as John would have been quick to observe the consequences of such developments for the churches.

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<sup>112</sup> Sweet, (1979) 25-26.

<sup>113</sup> Price, (1984) 112; see Heliodorus, *Aethiopica* X 3.

<sup>114</sup> Price, (1984) 111.

#### *4. Summary and Conclusions.*

Domitian was an able administrator who was aware of the affairs of the empire, and he was a force to be reckoned with in the provinces. At the same time, there was discontent in the empire, possibly against the army, and against Rome. Revelation's community existed within an environment partial to the imperial cult. The provinces were willing to express their loyalty to the emperor through aspects of the cult such as worshipping Roman gods and honouring the Caesar.<sup>115</sup> Consequently, Domitian's development of the imperial cult was related to his need to control and rule. The opposition of church members to any aspect of giving homage to the emperor would be dangerous, and pagans and many synagogue members would soon alert the respective authorities to such treasonable behaviour. The deification of the emperor is symptomatic of what is fundamentally wrong with Roman rule, that is, that it claims absolute power. Consequently, the nature of Revelation was political and anti-Domitian, rather than concerned with offended religious sensibilities

The evidence does not suggest a full scale persecution hypothesis, neither does it support a view that Domitian himself instigated persecution against church members. Domitian was an influential man who knew much that went on in the provinces and would be keen to make sure that suspect groups were dealt with. His influence would impinge upon the governors who would feel pressure to maintain economic and social order. In addition, they would also feel the need to implement Domitian's policies conscientiously, for example, in terms of the imperial cult or the paying of the Jewish tax. It would be up to the governors to make sure that such things were done and

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<sup>115</sup> Kraybill, (1996) 60-62 suggests the imperial cult was celebrated as an expression of gratitude, a sign of loyalty.

stability maintained and Christian safety depended on getting on well with their neighbours and authorities. Their existence could be said to be precarious, and certainly if a particularly hostile attitude was adopted towards Rome, it should be expected that suffering would follow. It seems from the above reconstruction that synagogue and church members could do well during Domitian's reign as long as they provided evidence of some compromise towards the cults of gods.

Overall, the rule of Rome was based: (a) on its power and ability to crush any who were a threat to it through violence; (b) on the principles of gaining wealth. Its policy of *pax Romana* was not a peaceful principle but one that allowed peace simply for the wealthy to become more wealthy and provide enough for the ordinary citizens so that their disenchantment would not explode into full revolutionary action; (c) on a successful propaganda that convinced ordinary people that Roman rule was divinely ordained and a good thing. It was a rule that invited synagogue and church members to compromise their beliefs and throw their lot in with Rome's ways so that they might become wealthy.

Like all the superpowers throughout history their rule was based on the principles of power and might, there is little place for love and compassion. It is a world far from the one that God intended and which the prophets of the OT regularly challenged.

REVELATION AND ITS SOCIAL SETTING

It has been seen that there is some evidence that Domitian's policies would lead to problems for the churches if they were not willing to compromise, and consequently the honour of God would be offended. Yet the evidence on the whole would not lead to a thesis that Revelation was written in the midst of pogroms against churches. Indeed, five of the seven churches were not suffering persecution. It is within the two churches, who seem to be experiencing problems, that the stories of suffering and martyrdom are kept alive as motivating responses to the dominant forces of their particular society as well as concern for God's honour. It must be observed that martyrdom-mindedness comes also from within one's tradition. It is how the community perceived its situation. As has been seen in chapter 5, Roman economic policies and the transfer of a particular Jewish tax to support Rome's imperial cult could be viewed as a violation of their honour, and of course an offence to God's honour. Oakman sees Revelation as the most exquisite and finely tuned critiques of all ancient literature.<sup>1</sup>

1. *Revelation's Depiction of the World.*

John develops a *Weltanschauung* antithetical to pagan society. In understanding how the development of this *Weltanschauung* came about there is a need to acknowledge that it was connected with the author's experiences of the various suspicious and hostile attitudes towards the faithful. People and groups do not usually hate and react against the system for no reason and they certainly do not present it as evil unless they

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<sup>1</sup> Oakman, (1993) 15.

feel the impact of this system either directly or through the suffering of others.

Revelation in line with the prophetic tradition (see chapter 1) sees compromise with the world as idolatry whatever the level of evil perpetrated by the particular world power.<sup>2</sup> John makes clear how he sees the values of the world and those who compromise with it; in 9.20 John describes the crimes of humanity in terms of the works of their hands, including worshipping demons as well as idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood. In 21.8 John labels those who will not enter the New Jerusalem as cowards, faithless, polluted, murderers, fornicators, sorcerers, idolaters and liars. In 22.15 he calls those left outside the new Jerusalem dogs, sorcerers, fornicators, murderers, idolaters and liars.

The essential message of John is that there is one God, and no one else should be worshipped. As Oakman writes: 'Fundamental to an appreciation of John's theology is the identification of his concern for God's honor'.<sup>3</sup> However, this religious message, as Bauckham argues, is politically and economically rooted. He writes:

'Not to submit to Roman power, not to glorify its violence and its profits, required a perspective alternative to the Roman ideology which permeated public life. For John and those who shared his prophetic insight, it was the Christian vision of the incomparable God, exalted above all worldly power, which relativized Roman power and exposed Rome's pretensions to divinity as a dangerous delusion'.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> For example, if you are brought up in the Irish Republican Tradition, it is highly unlikely that you would vote Unionist, even if the unionist was known to be very good.

<sup>3</sup> Oakman, (1993) 12.

<sup>4</sup> Bauckham, (1993b) 39.

Bauckham notes that faithful witness will mean dissociation from Rome's evil and results in them becoming victims of Rome. The religious aspect is very important but cannot be separated from the political and economic issues. Like Gandhi and the OT prophets, Revelation understands the political and economic abuses and consequent violence as rooted in a world that refuses and ignores God and his message - a world based on the principles of violence and power, which rejects God and the principles upon which the world is based - it is a godless society in which its rulers and those who compromise with it delude themselves in the idea that their reign is immortal. Oakman writes: 'From the standpoint of the Seer, God's honor has been offended by the course of earthly developments'.<sup>5</sup>

#### *World as Persecutor and Martyrdom as Response*

The clearest examples of a community coming to terms with the reality and everyday possibility of being a victim in Revelation are pointed out by Parkes: 6.9; 7.14; 12.11; 13.15; 16.6; 17.6; 18.24; 20.4.<sup>6</sup> It is not important whether John is or is not referring to those who have been killed within his own communities. If some of the texts refer to previous martyrs, they serve John's purposes in providing suitable models of exemplary behaviour and to present the powers as anti-God.<sup>7</sup> However, 13.15 and 20.4, for example, would fit with what is known about the period of Domitian and that Revelation is commenting on those who will and have been killed because they would

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<sup>5</sup> Oakman, (1993) 12.

<sup>6</sup> Parkes, (1934) 87.

<sup>7</sup> That is the theory of narration and heritage.

not worship or offer sacrifices to (on behalf of) the image or statue of Domitian.<sup>8</sup> Price has shown that ‘the establishment of the provincial cult of Domitian at Ephesus, with its colossal statue, is what lies behind the depiction in Revelation 13’.<sup>9</sup> Central to the texts is the message of encouragement and response to questions that the faithful in the communities were asking. In 6.9 the issue of how long will it be before righteousness is shown to be victorious is the question of a suffering community. 7.14 shows that martyrdom will result in victory. In 12.11 there is the development of the idea that through martyrdom victory will be gained. In 16.6 those who shed the blood of the saints will drink the cup of their own violence. 17.6 records the woman who is arrayed in luxurious attire, thus representing the city of Rome (17.18), shown to be drunk on the blood of the martyrs of Jesus (cf. 16.6). Her demise is portrayed in 17.16. In 18.24 after a careful attack on the economic system of Rome and the consequences of its policies, it is reported that the blood of the saints was found there. Again the hope of victory is clear. In 20.4 John expresses the belief that to those who had been martyred justice would be given (see chapter 10, section 3, part i).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Again, the question of whether the martyrdom occurs during Domitian’s reign is not a necessary one. It may well be that John is remembering those killed for their faith during the Neronian persecution. However, there is nothing that would mitigate the argument that Domitian’s reign also was the time for the martyrdom, or that John certainly expected it.

<sup>9</sup> Price, (1984) 197-198.

<sup>10</sup> This translation and interpretation of 20.4 will be discussed in more detail in chapter 10 section 3.

## *2. The Synagogue of Satan Accusation: Response to the Challenge to Compromise (Rev.2.9-10)*

Most scholars consider the anti-Roman dimension as important to Revelation, but the anti-synagogue influence cannot be underestimated. Bauckham makes the important point that ‘it is important to recognise . . . an intra-Jewish dispute. This is not the Gentile church claiming to supersede Judaism, but a rift like that between the temple establishment and the Qumran community (1QH 2.22)’.<sup>11</sup> In this section we hope to show that the synagogue of Satan accusation in Rev 2.9 reflects an internal dispute between two Jewish groups, i.e. the synagogue and that church, and that the dispute is connected with how Jews should relate to Rome during the reign of Domitian. It is proposed that the dispute resulted in one group denying the other group, and vice-versa, the honoured title of ‘Jew’,<sup>12</sup> and in the church being considered politically suspect before the Roman administration (Rev.2.10). For John, paying the tax is to become a shameful person through accepting the dishonourable employment of what was once used for Jewish purposes, namely, the temple.

### *a. Dispute Reflected in the Language of Rev.2.9-10*

The church at Smyrna is described as poor and one that is experiencing tribulation, yet, because of its tribulation and poverty, is described as rich. The letter reports that the sender, described as the “The First and the Last” (referring to Jesus), in verse 8, knows not only of their poverty and tribulation, but also of the blasphemy uttered by

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<sup>11</sup> Bauckham, (1993b) 124.

<sup>12</sup> The question as to who is a Jew is also reflected in Rom.2.28-29; see discussion in Ladd, (1978) 44 and Aune, (1997) 162, who compares the dispute in Revelation 2.9 with Romans.



those who say that they are the true Jews. It is because of the synagogue's blasphemy that they are not Jews, but rather, a synagogue of Satan.

It is possible that the synagogue was arguing that the church was not Jewish, which elicited a response from John to the synagogue that 'you are not Jews but a synagogue of Satan'. This, firstly, fits the use of the word 'Satan'. Satan can suggest 'one who accuses falsely' (Job 1-2; Zech.3). Secondly, it fits with 'blasphemy' which can indicate 'slander' (Matt.12.31, 15.19; Mk.15.29; Rom.3.8; 1 Cor.10.30; Eph 4.31; Col 3.8; 1 Tim. 6.4; 1 Pet.4.4 Jude 9).<sup>13</sup> Sweet argues for this usage and suggests that underlying the word is a charge made against the church.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, it is suggested that Rev.2.9 is understandable against the background of the synagogue arguing that they are Jews and that the church is not.<sup>15</sup>

V.10 anticipates the consequences of the blasphemy made by the synagogue. The church is expected to suffer and its members to be thrown into prison by the devil. The devil is generally thought to represent Rome. Consequently, the synagogue had reported the blasphemy to Rome which engendered a fear of imprisonment. It is supposed by some that only Rome had the power to incarcerate.<sup>16</sup> Rev.12.9 and 20.2 strengthens this connection when the ancient serpent is described as the devil and Satan. Bauckham suggests they signify the forces of opposition to God manifested in

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<sup>13</sup> See Aune, (1997) 162 for discussion of βλαφημία.

<sup>14</sup> Sweet, (1979) 85; Ladd, (1978) 43 also observes the 'slander' aspect; Harrington, (1993) 58 who compares Rom.9.8 as to who are the true heirs.

<sup>15</sup> This should not argue against Christians also being in mind, those who were more in line with the synagogue, see Knight, (1999) 44-45.

<sup>16</sup> Yarbro Collins, (1979) 17.

the contemporary political power, i.e. Rome.<sup>17</sup> Rome, consequently, becomes the beast, the devil and Satan. Synagogue of Satan thus reflects not only a synagogue that accuses falsely, but also a synagogue in collusion with Rome. Kraybill indeed comments that the use of Satan is ‘a way of highlighting commercial or political relationships some Jews had with Rome’.<sup>18</sup>

In conclusion, the claim of Rev.2.9 that the synagogue is of Satan can be understood as a response to accusations the synagogue made against the church that it was not Jewish. Moreover, they made such accusations to Rome resulting in possible punishment. Satan was also related to the beast, an image representing Rome, and so the church argued that the synagogue was hand in hand with Rome and, thus, no longer worthy of the name “Jew”. Consequently, Rev.2.9-10 reflects two groups who have differing attitudes towards Rome, and those who compromise with Rome cannot be considered faithful to the God of Israel.

#### b. *Social Setting*

##### *Revelation and the Fiscus Judaicus*

Smyrna was a prosperous, leading political and religious city in Asia Minor. Moreover, it was also a faithful ally of Rome.<sup>19</sup> The question regarding how Jews should live and work in this climate had been tackled long ago, and varying degrees of compromise and failure to compromise are evident. Kraybill suggests this was also the case for the

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<sup>17</sup> Bauckham, (1993a) 187.

<sup>18</sup> Kraybill, (1996) 170.

<sup>19</sup> Caird, (1984) 34.

church.<sup>20</sup> There is evidence in the NT for a more compromising attitude towards Rome (see Rom 13, 1 Pet 2.13-17; 1 Tim 2.1-2). One key issue, Oakman observes, by which an Empire dishonours a defeated people, is to seize a defeated people's own particular tax which is used to maintain their sacred traditions, and then use it for their own sacred traditions. It has been seen that this happened to the Jewish people and the money was used to rebuild the Capitoline temple to Jupiter in Rome. Oakman thinks that the *fiscus Judaicus* is alluded to in 13.3, the wound on one of Rome's seven hills (the Capitol) that had been healed.<sup>21</sup>

Domitian's reformation of the tax legitimated the churches and exempted them from participation in the cult as long as they paid the tax. Previously, they had not paid because they were not eligible. Therefore, in the eyes of many Gentile and Jewish followers of Christ, the extension would be welcomed. The social setting has not deteriorated for the church because of specific policies introduced by Domitian. Rather, it has improved, and according to Thompson, Domitian was a benevolent emperor towards synagogue and church.<sup>22</sup> Yet, for those who did not compromise, difficulties would be on the horizon. The church at Smyrna was uncompromising. Its members refused to pay the tax, the synagogue accused them of not being Jews because they did not pay the specifically Jewish tax; however, the church said that they were true Jews because they refused to pay the tax.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Kraybill, (1996) 168.

<sup>21</sup> Oakman, (1993) 17. Hills are not part of the depiction in Rev.13 although a possibility, on the basis of Rev.17.9-10 as the seven mountains are seven heads and also seven kings. Nero is in mind here.

<sup>22</sup> Thompson, (1990) 172.

<sup>23</sup> Similarly Justin argues against Trypho that the church is the true spiritual Israel (*Dialogues with Trypho* 11.15).

The church at Smyrna was economically poor in an economically rich city and was experiencing tribulation. Scholars are right to point out that θλίψις could mean persecution. The letter to Smyrna, however, indicates that the experience of persecution was not a present factor. This might suggest that the authorities had not been informed about the failure of the churches to pay the tax which points to the idea simply of a debate between church and synagogue rather than the synagogue informing against the church. Yet, it is likely that the synagogue had made accusations to the authorities that the church members were not Jews because they did not pay the tax. This is why the church felt that prison was a possibility. Not paying the tax exposed them as showing contempt for the emperor and uncompromising in spite of policies that allowed compromise. Both uncompromising synagogue and church members were placed in a difficult situation. The synagogue and pagans would be quick to pick up on this and expose such an uncompromising group for not paying the tax. This again fits the setting of Rev.2.9. The synagogue would accuse church members of not paying the tax; this may have been interpreted by John as saying that church members are not Jews; for John this may be indeed blasphemous. John counters this claim by stating that church members were Jews and in fact the synagogue was not a synagogue of God but of Satan. This suggests that John understood the synagogue to be identifying with Rome, who for John was, indeed, Satan. Through not paying the tax, church members would be thrown into gaol (Rev.2.10). Hemer suggest that 'the tax placed the Jewish communities in a position of peculiar power *vis-à-vis* Christians. By disowning a Christian and informing against him, he might deprive him of his possible

recourse to toleration at a price, and render him liable to the emperor-cult'.<sup>24</sup> However, the evidence suggests more that the churches during Domitian's reign were considered liable to the tax and refused it because it was to compromise with Rome. Yet, from the evidence looked at in the previous chapter, many synagogue members would inform against church members for not paying it. Jews were not *religio licita*, and, as Trebilco points out, the Romans 'responded to the needs of the moments according to the prevailing political situation, making *ad hoc* decisions with differing details rather than following the predetermined guidelines of a charter'.<sup>25</sup> Many Jews were worried that rights could be revoked at any point if Domitian and the governors thought them a danger in society.<sup>26</sup> There is evidence that compromise was an issue for many Jews and Christians. To what extent does one accommodate oneself to the foreign power and maintain one's honour rating? Revelation's message is that no compromise is the only way.

### *Compromising and Uncompromising Attitudes*

Extreme poverty, however, was a factor, and the consequences of such poverty, as many economically poor people know, can be described as a *tribulation* in which individuals and groups are divested of power.<sup>27</sup> The synagogue, in contrast, was seen by the church as being in collusion with Rome, suggesting that the setting was right for a debate on the correct attitude towards Rome and its policies. Kraybill points out that

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<sup>24</sup> Hemer, (1986) 8; see also DeSilva, (1992) 279.

<sup>25</sup> Trebilco, (1991) 8. See also Applebaum, (1976b) 420-463.

<sup>26</sup> Philo, *Leg.* 44.353 writes that, under Gaius, Jewish rights were sometimes revoked; Jews were also expelled from Rome under Tiberius (*Jos. Ant.* 18.3.5 or 18.83-84; Tacitus, *Ann.* 2.85; Suet. *Tib.* 36).

<sup>27</sup> Aune, (1997) 161 emphasises the literal poverty.

during the early Roman imperial era, Jewish merchants reached the far corners of the Roman Empire selling wine, spices, perfumes and perhaps textiles.<sup>28</sup> There is evidence that provincial Jews co-operated closely with the Roman government in administrative affairs.<sup>29</sup> Rabbinic tradition holds that Johanan ben Zakkai spent forty years in trade (*Sifre* 357.14). Tamari comments that 'Judaism never had any religious or ethical objections to buying and selling goods for profit'.<sup>30</sup> However, it cannot be assumed that all synagogue members were doing well and all church members were doing badly, Bauckham points out that 'Revelation's first readers, as we know from the seven messages to the churches in chapters 2-3, were by no means all poor and persecuted like the Christians at Smyrna. Many were affluent, self-satisfied and compromising'.<sup>31</sup> It has been observed that there was potential for improving one's financial situation, and Asia Minor had a flourishing economy. Oakman concludes *vis-à-vis* the economy during Domitian's reign that there was great prosperity, but there was also an unequal spread in the distribution of this wealth.<sup>32</sup> Petronius' first century novel recounts the deeds of Trimalchio, a slave in Asia Minor, who through *wheeling and dealing* becomes a very rich man. Given this situation, one could conclude that the churches should not compromise in any way with the Roman system. It may be added that Revelation may also be against the so called *wheeling and dealing* that was needed to make money. It can be seen, therefore, that the question of wealth gained from involvement with Rome could be an issue in a dispute between synagogue and

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<sup>28</sup> Kraybill, (1996) 186.

<sup>29</sup> Kraybill, (1996) 188.

<sup>30</sup> Tamari, (1987) 65-66 quoted from Kraybill, (1996) 186.

<sup>31</sup> Bauckham, (1993a) 377

<sup>32</sup> Oakman, (1993) 213.

church.

It was the church's attitude towards Rome that led to its poverty. The ability to earn would be considerably reduced, a point Aune makes: 'Uncompromising Christians found it difficult to make a living in a pagan environment'.<sup>33</sup> The writer to the Hebrews also acknowledges the poverty that goes with faith (Heb.10.34).<sup>34</sup> A modern day illustration may be that of a physics' graduate refusing to work in the arms trade and her consequent poverty possibly leading to association with other like minded groups. Also, Wilson's observations of African millenarian groups saw groups arising out of a dissatisfaction with the current social order. Underlying the groups' belief system is their longing for the millennium to dawn in the present. However, in terms of the church in Smyrna, they had to deal with a delay in God establishing his kingdom on earth. This could result in a sense of doubt or discomfort regarding previously held beliefs. According to Festinger's theory of *cognitive dissonance*, this sense of doubt could lead to an intensification of belief leading to a group's refusal to comply, and, possibly, result in poverty and tribulation. Moreover, as Gager has pointed out, the intensification of belief could result in increased missionary activity, thus increasing the sense of group belonging and lessening the individual's sense of discomfort.<sup>35</sup> This would lead to even greater separation between synagogue and church. Goodman points out that there is much evidence that the early church set out to convert members of the synagogue and that the synagogue was hostile to

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<sup>33</sup> Aune, (1997) 161; see also Charles, (1920) vol.1, 56; Caird, (1984) 35; Roloff (1993) 48.

<sup>34</sup> See Beale, (1999) 241.

<sup>35</sup> Gager, (1975) 37-49.



proselytizing or at least ambivalent.<sup>36</sup> The desire to proselytize is therefore connected with an uncompromising attitude to Rome or society as a whole. This attitude is most clearly seen in Rev.18 in which a verbal attack on Rome is made and the evident manifestations of her rule listed in verses 11-13. Of particular interest to this discussion regarding the synagogue of Satan is one group who are described as compromising with Rome (Rev.18.15). Philo reports the cessation of Jewish business in the east due to the stirring up of hatred against Jews. The result, writes Philo, was 'those (i.e. Jews) who had lent money lost what they lent, and no one was permitted, neither farmer, nor captain of a ship, nor merchant, nor artisan, to employ himself in his usual manner' (*Flaccus* 57). The word for merchant used in Rev. 18 (οἱ ἔμποροι) is the one used for the Jewish merchants in Philo. It is not suggested that Revelation has only synagogue merchants in mind in 18:15, rather, all who compromise with Rome. Still, the evidence suggests that many both in the synagogue and in the church were among the merchants.

Pliny's trial of Christians in 112 CE suggests that the church could be in a vulnerable position before Rome, not for being Christian, but for being anti-Rome. Downing points out that there are really no accounts of the trials of Christians for being Christians before 112 CE and thus the Jewish tax had not resulted in arrests or trials.<sup>37</sup> Surely if Christians were being arrested or put on trial over the last twenty or so years, Pliny would not have needed to write to Trajan asking him for advice, he would have found precedents for his situation in the archives. Moreover, Pliny

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<sup>36</sup> Goodman, (1992) 70 and (1994) *pace* Feldman (1993) and Borgen, (1996) 45-69 who does not acknowledge Goodman's arguments.

<sup>37</sup> Downing, (1988) 118.



acknowledges that he is not even sure whether being a Christian is punishable, or only the crimes associated with being a Christian were to be punished; he writes:

‘I am not at all sure whether it is the name of Christian which is punishable, even if innocent of crime, or rather the crimes associated with the name’ (*Ep.* 96)

Before Trajan’s reign, being a Christian was not punishable; however, anti-social behaviour would have been. Law abiding Christians would be left in peace, but not troublemakers.<sup>38</sup>

*Summary.* The situation was right for a dispute between the synagogue and the church, regarding who had the right to be called a Jew. Moreover, Revelation reveals an attitude that could lead to punishment for being anti-social, for example, its attitude towards wealth, and its desire to stand firm against the Roman system.

### *c. Evidence for an Internal Conflict*

Borgen points out that the Qumran community harshly criticised other Jews.<sup>39</sup> Beale sees parallels between the accusation that the synagogue was of Satan with Qumran.<sup>40</sup>

The Damascus Document illustrates this point:

‘During all those years Satan shall be unleashed against Israel, as He spoke by the hand of Isaiah . . . saying: *terror and the pit and the snare are upon you, O inhabitant of the land* . . .

Interpreted, these are the three nets of Satan with which Levi son of Jacob said that he catches Israel by setting them up as three kinds of righteousness. The first is fornication, the second is riches, and the third is profanation of the temple’ (CD 4.14-20).

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<sup>38</sup> See Slater, (1998) 249.

<sup>39</sup> Borgen, (1996) 282.

<sup>40</sup> Beale, (1999) 241.

The three nets, especially the one regarding riches closely resembles the argument being made about the synagogue being rich. An issue involved in this dispute was the pernicious nature of wealth which would result in alienation from God. The instrument of this alienation is Satan. The Qumran text is suggesting that Israel will be of Satan. It might also be interesting to consider this text in the light of the view of some Qumran scholars who suggest that the Damascus Document was not intended for the group living at Qumran but for others who adopted similar beliefs and practices and yet had not exiled themselves to Qumran. Their main argument for this is based on where the author of CD mentions 'camps' (7.6), 'the camp' (10.23), 'the assembly of the towns of Israel' (12.19) and 'the assembly of the camps' (12.23).

Similarly, in 1QH 2.22 Bauckham observes that the Qumran community denounced their fellow Jews using the phrase 'a gathering of Belial'.<sup>41</sup> The word for 'gathering' could be rendered 'synagogue'. Belial is used as a proper name for Satan in CD and the War Scroll. Thus they are a synagogue of Satan.

*Summary.* There is evidence not only for disputes between Jewish groups, but, also, that compromise with Satan was part of the accusation, an accusation that perceived wealth as an attribute and sign of belonging to Satan.

#### *d. Conclusions*

Bauckham's point above that it is important to recognise an intra-Jewish dispute underlying Revelation can be said to have been established in terms of Rev.2.9-10. Moreover, it is like a rift that existed between the temple establishment and the

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<sup>41</sup> Bauckham, (1993b) 124; Beale, (1999) 241.

Qumran community (1QH 2.22). The synagogue's blasphemy that they were Jews and not the church is connected with the church's uncompromising attitude towards Rome. It would seem that the synagogue would be concerned to distance itself from the church inasmuch as it attached great importance to maintaining good relations with Rome. Domitian's policy on the tax was crucial as it gave the church its own right of exemption from participating in the imperial cult. However, a refusal to pay would be seen as the church's confession that they are not 'Jews', but troublemakers. Consequently, Domitian's tax led to the synagogue declaring both to the Roman authorities and to the church itself that 'they are Jews'. Rev.2.9 is a response in which John protests that 'they are not, but are a synagogue of Satan'. Ultimately it could result in church members being detained (Rev.2.10). This would be welcomed by the synagogue, and would lead synagogue members to think twice about joining the church. Moreover, it helped draw a distinction between synagogue and church in the eyes of Rome. However, from Revelation's perspective, to pay the tax would be to participate in the cult and the consequences of Rome's economic policy. In the same way as 1QH 2.22, Revelation reacts against Jews who compromise with Rome. Consequently, the synagogue would be of Satan and not God's chosen.

### 3. *John on Patmos*

Beasley-Murray points out that the author is probably not living on the island at the time of writing due to the past tense of *γίνομαι* (1.9).<sup>42</sup> He argues that John was banished because he was a leader and needed to be separated in order to avoid the possibility of more disturbance, and presumably released when it was appropriate.

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<sup>42</sup> Beasley-Murray, (1983) 64; Aune, (1997) 77 suggests it only as a possibility.

However, it is odd that John would have been released, surely he would always have been a threat. This raises the possibility that John was on retreat rather than banished. Banishment was a form of punishment that Domitian allowed, which would confirm that there is no serious reason why he would not have had John exiled. It has been assumed that Patmos was used for the banishment of political offenders on the basis of Tacitus *Ann.* iii. 68, iv. 30, xv. 71, Juvenal. *Sat.* I. 73, vi. 563 f., x. 170, and Pliny, *NH.* iv. 12. 23.<sup>43</sup> However, none of these texts mention Patmos as a custodial island. Patmos is mentioned by Pliny, but is not described in any way as serving the function of detention. Tacitus and Juvenal mention some islands, namely Gyarus, Donusa and Seriphos, islands that are within the vicinity of Patmos, which may indicate that Patmos served a similar function. Still, Charles believes the syntax supports the author's banishment.<sup>44</sup> He argues that the preposition ἕνεκα should be expected if John was on Patmos to receive the revelation. However, ἕνεκα and διὰ are hardly distinguishable in meaning when accompanied with the accusative and both could indicate that he was on the island. διὰ could indicate that he was on the island either as a punishment, or to receive the revelation.<sup>45</sup> Beasley-Murray observes 6.9 and 20.4 which show the same structure as 1.9. In 6.9 and 20.4 it is clear that 'witness to Jesus' is the cause of suffering and punishment.<sup>46</sup> In view of the prevalence of persecution and suffering being connected with faithful testimony, and John's own sense of suffering (1.9), it seems more likely that John was on Patmos as a punishment.

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<sup>43</sup> Charles, (1920) vol.1, 21.

<sup>44</sup> See Charles, (1920) vol.1, 20 for discussion.

<sup>45</sup> Blass and Debrunner § 222.

<sup>46</sup> Beasley-Murray, (1983) 64. Note also 7.15, 12.11. Swete, (1922) 11-12 emphasises that John sees himself as a fellow sufferer with the churches

How is ἐγενόμην to be accounted for? Beasley-Murray's argument that John was no longer on the island overestimates the significance of the aorist insisting it is more precise than it need be. Aune sees the aorist having an ordinary narrative use which does not imply that John is no longer on Patmos.<sup>47</sup>

#### *4. Religious, Economic and Political Challenge and Revelation's Response*

Bauckham comments on those who make the mistake of locating Revelation as a text directed only against the imperial cult, thus identifying Christians' refusal to participate in the ruler cult as the cause of their troubles.<sup>48</sup> The evidence points to a more complex picture in which the safety and well being of church members is dependent on being on good terms with their neighbours, as Domitian had skilfully created a system which used and rewarded those who were loyal to him, and one that resulted in various types of action being taken against churches. Economic and political issues are all intimately connected to the Roman imperial cult.

#### *Revelation and the Imperial Cult*

Roman power was ultimately represented in the figure of the emperor, and central to the maintenance of the power relationship was the *imperial cult*. Religion, politics and economics, however, were all intertwined within this. The opposition of church members to any aspect of giving homage to the emperor would be dangerous and the pagans and many synagogue members would soon alert the respective authorities to such treasonable behaviour. The deification of the emperor is symptomatic of what is

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<sup>47</sup> Aune, (1997) 77.

<sup>48</sup> Bauckham, (1993a) 338-384; Wengst, (1987) 118-135 and Kraybill, (1996).

fundamentally wrong with Roman rule, that is, it claims absolute power. Consequently, the nature of Revelation was political and anti-Domitian, rather than concerned with offended religious sensibilities. If so, John, like the classical prophets, is capable of confronting political and socio-economic abuses, and is in clear contrast to Paul (Rom.13.4) and the author of 1 Peter (1 Pet. 2.17). Beckwith, however, places the emphasis on the fact that Domitian arrogated to himself an inherent religious character.<sup>49</sup> However, this seems to underestimate the general political sense that Revelation has and its general sense of opposition to a political system. Moreover, if a man or a society puts its trust in its power and wealth it becomes a worshiper of its own works, an idolater and rejects God. Therefore, for Revelation, the economic and political abuses and inequality with the violent consequences stem from rejecting God. As Oakman has pointed out, crucial to John's theology is the concern for God's honour. He writes: 'The Roman imperial cult demands such honor for Caesar'.<sup>50</sup> Political and economic policies on earth offend God's honour.

### *Challenge and Response (Rev. 13, 17, 18)*

Bauckham writes: 'the critique in chapter 13 is primarily political, the critique in chapters 17-18 primarily economic, but in both cases also deeply religious'.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Beckwith, (1919) 201.

<sup>50</sup> Oakman, (1993) 12.

<sup>51</sup> Bauckham, (1994) 36; Provan, (1996) 88 argues against Bauckham that the sin of Rev.18 is not economic, but religious yet the two for Bauckham are intimately connected.

a. Chapter 13: critique of Political values of the world

The θηρίον ascends from the sea in Rev.13. Most agree that the beast represents the military and political power of the Roman Emperors. For John, the destruction of Jerusalem would still be present in his mind, and still is the source of oppression. The ten diadems upon the horns represent royalty (Rev.13.1).<sup>52</sup> The seven heads would indicate seven Caesars. The 'blasphemous name' alludes to the title applied to the emperors increasingly through the first century, and which culminated in the desire of Domitian to be addressed as *Dominus et Deus*.<sup>53</sup> In 13.3, it is reported that one of the beast's heads had been mortally wounded. It is widely agreed that this head best fits Nero.<sup>54</sup> The beast recovers; this may refer to the restoration of the empire under the Flavians, according to Bauckham.<sup>55</sup> It made war on the saints, and conquered them; it blasphemed God; it is all powerful and rules over every tribe, people and tongue and nation, and they worship it. The second beast, like a lamb, in 13.11 makes the earth and the inhabitants worship the first beast. This refers to the imperial priests who perpetuated Rome's dominance in the provinces by promoting the imperial cult. Sweet suggests that those in the church who were arguing for the divine authority of the state are alluded to.<sup>56</sup> This suggestion makes sense of the beast portrayed as a lamb (13.11), i.e. the enemies to the church belonged to the beast but presented themselves as

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<sup>52</sup> See Stevenson, (1995) 257-272 for a discussion of the crowns' significance.

<sup>53</sup> Beasley-Murray, (1983) 209.

<sup>54</sup> Beasley-Murray, (1983) 210; Bauckham, (1993b) 37 and most.

<sup>55</sup> Bauckham, (1993b) 37. It is also interesting to note that Domitian was likened to Nero, and is the only emperor portrayed having a Neronian haircut! See Sib.Or.5.93-110; 214-227 for the return of Nero and discussion in Bauckham, (1993a) 423-431 *pace* Corsini, (1983) 230-234.

<sup>56</sup> Sweet, (1979) 214-215.

followers of Christ. They were persuasive to members of the church, probably members of their own community, perhaps even from the synagogue. This coheres with what is known of Domitian's reign in which outright oppression was not really a factor, compromise was the biggest danger to synagogue and church. It is suggested that John intended the parallel as a christological parody. The first beast (Rev.13) parodies Christ, the dragon (Rev.12) parodies his father, and the second beast (13.11) parodies the Holy Spirit (or prophets inspired by the Holy Spirit). This parody shows that John saw certain features of the Roman Empire as constituting a divine and messianic claim that rivalled Christ's.<sup>57</sup> The parody is developed in such a way as to show that Christ is the conqueror and not the emperor. Also, there is the possibility that John intended a clear parallel between the death and resurrection of Jesus and the death and resurrection of the beast. In 13.17 there is a hint of the economic exploitation of those who would not conform to the worship of the beast.

*Summary.* Rev.13 portrays Rome and the way it functions as it seduces the faithful to compromise with its ideology. It urges a response of nonviolence (13.10) through portraying Roman power as a violent, oppressive and idolatrous representative of Satan through its emperors, in its armies and in its propaganda machine in the imperial cult. Also, there may be hints of internal debate within the church and against the synagogue members who urged compromise with Rome. Rome is not divine but satanic (cf. the dragon in Rev.12).

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<sup>57</sup> Morris, (1979, p.171; Sweet, (1979) 216; Bauckham, (1993a) 441; Harrington, (1993) 144.



b. *Chapters 17-18: critique of the Economic values of the world*

*Overview.* The harlot in Rev.17 represents the city of Rome who rides upon the military powers of its army. In 17.14 the Lamb is given the title ‘Lord of lords and King of kings’ which, Sweet comments, ‘may be used in conscious opposition to Domitian’s imperial pretensions’.<sup>58</sup> Rome is depicted as wealthy, i.e. arrayed in purple and jewels and pearls (cf. 18.16). This wealth was connected with the might of the army and its ability to exploit other nations. The list in 18.16 of goods arraying Rome were brought to Rome by the great network of trade throughout her empire.<sup>59</sup> Bauckham concludes that, for Revelation, Rome’s subjects give far more to her than she gives to them,<sup>60</sup> which may even, according to Wengst, explain Rev.6.6 insofar as shortage would arise out of such an economic policy.<sup>61</sup> Similarly, in Rev.9.21 John castigates thieves. It is likely that Revelation had in mind those synagogue and church members who had or were considering compromising and thus benefit from the exploitation of the weak, and those who exposed church members to the authorities, and who may be included among those who weep (18.11, 17). Similarly, the author addresses his own community in 18.4 when he writes:

‘Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her plagues’.

This fits with the nature of John’s message to Sardis and Laodicea.<sup>62</sup> It is also likely

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<sup>58</sup> Sweet, (1979) 25.

<sup>59</sup> Wengst, (1987) 122; Bauckham, (1993a) 346; Kraybill, (1996) 103-104.

<sup>60</sup> Bauckham, (1993a) 346; also Wengst, (1987) 122 ‘whereas Rome and its vassals live in abundance, like those who do business with them, and make profits, famine prevails in the province’.

<sup>61</sup> Hemer, (1986) 45; Wengst, (1987) 122; Kraybill, (1996) 147-148; Beale, (1998) 381; see chapter 5 section 2 above regarding Domitian’s handling of the provinces.

<sup>62</sup> Yarbro Collins, (1984b) 88-89.

that Revelation represents a tradition that would refuse to pay the tax as part of their nonviolent resistance against Rome (see above discussion on Rev.2.9-10). This was connected with their refusal to engage in any way with supporting the military machine, the building of ruler cult temples, or the buying of special privileges. Such a response is indeed reminiscent of Gandhi's non-cooperation policy. Noncooperation meant suffering for John (see Rev.13.17). Similarly, Gandhi wrote:

'Nonviolent noncooperation means renunciation of the benefits of a system with which we can noncooperate'.<sup>63</sup>

*Bauckham on Rev.18.* Bauckham, commenting on the twenty-eight items of merchandise listed (vv.12-13), suggests, 'that the merchandise in question was generally seen as a feature of the newly conspicuous wealth and extravagance of the rich families of Rome in the period of the early empire'.<sup>64</sup> Bauckham shows that most of the items on the list illustrate how the wealth which rich citizens of Rome gained from the empire was spent on conspicuous luxuries, thus possibly leading to discontent.<sup>65</sup> However, what did lead to serious discontent was the amount of food that Rome imported to feed its million strong population (18.13). This is reflected in Rev.6.5-6, and elsewhere as has been noted during Domitian's reign. Citizens of Asia Minor were struggling to buy the basic food stuffs.<sup>66</sup> Yet this may fit best the reign of Domitian, although such a critique could be directed against any of the Flavians or Nero. Indeed, it will be argued below, this critique could be aimed at any ruling

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<sup>63</sup> Quoted in Jesudasan, (1984) 75.

<sup>64</sup> Bauckham, (1993a) 352. See also Wengst, (1987) 124-125.

<sup>65</sup> Bauckham, (1993a) 363.

<sup>66</sup> Hemer, (1986) 158-159 discusses this issue in more detail.

military might throughout history, however particularly corrupt and tyrannical. As it has been argued (see Introduction, Section 2), the culture and tradition are important in the way someone sees their social setting. However, the evidence suggests that during Domitian's reign there was a particularly good opportunity for trade and making money. Yet it will be argued below that underlying Rev.18 is John's perception of Rome as one who is like the previous representatives of Satan who plundered the innocent but will be plundered itself following the traditions of the prophets (see chapter 1).

### *Revelation 18: An Exegesis*

Opinions differ regarding the motivations, functions and intentions behind Rev.18.<sup>67</sup> The central motivation underlying Rev.18 is John's hatred of Rome as a plundering nation like the previous foreign nations, seen in the OANs. Such an attitude arises from John's reading and appropriation of tradition, as well as the abuse of power by Rome. Also, it is his concern to encourage his community not to compromise with Rome. John thus presents Rome as one who will fall like the previous foreign nations depicted in the prophets, especially seen in the oracles against the nations (see chapter 1). The distinctive contribution of this discussion is to show that the merchandise in Rev.18.12-13 are items Rome plundered from the nations like the previous foreign nations also plundered. In some ways the proposal here draws much from the insight

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<sup>67</sup> For a brief summary see Yarbro Collins, (1980) 185-187. Recent important publications include Bauckham, (1993b) 338-383 in which he pays particular attention to the list of cargo and argues that chapter 18 is an economic critique of Rome. Provan, (1996), rejects Bauckham's work and argues that there is no particular setting being addressed, and emphasizes the importance of the Hebrew background to the text.

of W. Schoff's unacknowledged study in 1920 on commerce in the Bible. He writes of the list of merchandise in Rev.18.12-13: 'The list of articles of trade might stand for a sketch of the commerce of Rome, but when examined it is evidently no more than a selection from the tabernacle and temple specifications'.<sup>68</sup> Schoff notes the idea of a nation building their sacred traditions out of that which they have plundered.<sup>69</sup> Indeed, he sees the items in Rev.18.12-13 as that which had been plundered and the very material that sustained the imperial cult of Rome (cf. Rev.17.3-5).<sup>70</sup> The proposal here would not wish to emphasize necessarily the nature of all the items *vis-à-vis* the temple to the extent that Schoff does, but their background more generally in the OT. Moreover, this discussion will not reject the thesis that many of the items were also connected with what Rome imported. This will be seen in the discussion below.

*Plundering and Being Plundered in Revelation 18.* Mounce writes *vis-à-vis* Babylon:

'The introduction of this symbolic reference without explanation assumes that the readers would understand the allusion. The ancient Mesopotamian city of Babylon had become the political and religious capital of a world empire, renowned for its luxury and moral corruption. Above all it was the great enemy of the people of God. For the early church the city of Rome was a

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<sup>68</sup> Schoff, (1920) 99.

<sup>69</sup> Schoff, (1920) 45.

<sup>70</sup> Schoff, (1920) 97; cf. Josephus *War* 7.5.7 (or 7.158-162) observes how the vessels of the plundered Jerusalem temple were used by Vespasian in the temple of peace: 'he also laid up therein, as ensigns of his glory, those golden vessels and instruments that were taken out of the Jerusalem temple'(tr. Whiston)

contemporary Babylon'.<sup>71</sup>

Mounce's point is well made as the historical Babylon was, indeed, a morally corrupt capital within the OT. Consequently, it would be the perfect *type* for John in presenting the superpower of his day as: hedonistic, morally corrupt, idolatrous, and plunderous. The above observations regarding the OT (see chapter 1) provide the interpretative framework for comprehending John's motives and intentions for Rev.18. Essentially, the thesis being presented here is that the language used in Rev.18 could have been used of any of the cities and nations at their most powerful when they exploited the poor although the particular underlying model which John has drawn upon for chapter 18 was also motivated by John's own reflections upon the particular oppressive outworking of Roman rule as discussed above.<sup>72</sup>

*The Wanton Plunderer.* In 18.7 (cf. Is.47.8-9) John indicates that Babylon as a consequence of glorifying herself and playing the wanton has caused much suffering:

ὅσα ἐδόξασεν αὐτήν καὶ ἐστρηνίασεν, τοσοῦτον δότε αὐτῇ βασιανισμόν καὶ πένθος'.

Sweet explains ἐστρηνίασεν as one who 'flaunted her power'. The word is related to insolent luxury (cf. Nah.3.4). ἐστρηνίασεν on one occasion translates אכל (to consume) in which it is said that Israel will *consume* the wealth of the nations (Symmachus Is.61.6). Τοσοῦτον correlates with ὅσα: therefore, Babylon will

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<sup>71</sup> Mounce, (1977) 273; Kraybill, (1996) 149-152 discusses the parallels between Rome and Ancient Babylon.

<sup>72</sup> In many ways it might be said that I take a middle way between Bauckham, (1993a) 377 who argues for the particularity of Asia Minor here and Provan (1996) and Buchanan, (1993a) 489 who argue that there is nothing particular about Asia Minor.

experience the same tortures that she caused for others (see Lev.24.17-22 cf. Rom.1.24-32 for the idea of punishment by means of one's own sin).

Since in her heart she says: 'A queen I sit, I am no widow, mourning I shall never see', so shall her plagues come in a single day... (18.7b-8a cf. Is.47.8)

Rome's rule has led to death and mourning; the very things that the supnation boasts she will not experience (18.7). In consuming, Rome has plundered the nations. John comments that Rome's wealth will be plundered (ἀπόλλυμι v.14; ἐρημόω vv.16, 17 and 19) experiencing what she has done to others (cf. v.7). The Greek words suggest utter loss and destruction. **אכר** would underlie ἀπόλλυμι in 18.14 and points to destruction of a nation that has sinned (cf. Josh.23.16). **כר** underlies ἐρημόω in 18.16, 17 indicating plunder (cognate Arab *haraba* actually means 'to plunder'). Significantly it occurs in the oracle against Babylon (Jer.50.21, 27 cf. Ezek.26.12). Plunder is associated with Holy War and the loss of wealth through military invasion. There is no clear military invasion envisaged here and therefore it may be argued that plunder is not a key theme in Rev.18. However, the importing of goods by the supnation may be plunder meaning loss for others. It was Rome's insatiable appetite for wealth that caused much suffering as Ezekiel reports that Tyre was filled with violence because of the abundance of her trade (Rev.18.6; Ezek.28.16). In the same way Rome's wealth would be taken (vv.14, 17, 19). In 18.16 John describes Rome (18.16) in language resonant in OT tradition (Jer.4.30; 10.4; Ezek.16.8-14; 23.40; Hos.2.13; 1QM and 6 Ezra.15.46). Bedecked in expensive items is common in the OT, especially of the harlot Jerusalem. Babylon is depicted as so rich that it was Eden like (Ezek.28.13).

*That Great City.* In 18.10 John predicates Babylon as ἡ πόλις μεγάλη. The phrase occurs for the first time in the OT in Gen.10.12 (Hb: **הוא העיר הגדלה**). 'Great' is used of cities built by Nimrod (Gen.10.6-14).<sup>73</sup> This is significant in that the cities of Japheth and Shem are not called 'great'. It is suggested that **העיר הגדלה** must be understood in the light of Gen.10.6-14 as a pejorative term which is used for those that set themselves up as mighty and wealthy, thus rejecting God. The second occurrence is **עיר גדלה גבעון** (Josh.10.2). Gibeon was inhabited by Hivites (Josh 9.7). Hivites were descended from Canaan (Gen. 10.17), the uncle of Nimrod, and are connected with those cursed by Noah (Gen.9.25). The expression is encountered in terms of the fall of the great city, that in spite of all its power, it would fall. In Jer.22.8 is found the only occurrence of Jerusalem described as **עיר גדלה**. The phrase is spoken by the nations with regards to the fall of the city, and it was the failure of the city to keep its covenant with God and for its plunder of its own people (Jer.22.13-14). Jerusalem is now like a foreign nation to Jeremiah, it is like the cities built by Ham and his descendants. Nineveh, again connected with the family of the cursed Canaan, is described in Jonah as **עיר גדלה** (1.2, 3.2, 4.11) and in 3.3 the unusual expression **עיר גדלה לאלהים**, this could be translated as being 'to God' although the usual translation would be 'superlatively great'. Nineveh is described both great and one that was inhabited by those who did not know their right hand from the left. It may be possible to see some significance in these texts. All occurrences of **עיר גדלה** are

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<sup>73</sup> It is suggested that the occurrence of **עיר גדלה** is significant in that it is not used of any of the cities of Shem and Japheth.

connected with wickedness. There may be some irony here, greatness may indeed not be so great. It is suggested as a possibility that John was aware of the phrase גדלה עיר and its connectedness with wickedness and arrogance. In this case, the expression גדלה עיר is an expression that alludes to ironic claims to being like God.<sup>74</sup> Consequently, any city that is in opposition to God would be intended by this phrase. John's opposition to Rome is that, like the other superpowers, she claimed to be as God, that is 'great', she is wealthy and plunders the innocent, but will fall.

*The Fall of Babylon.* In 18.22 the grim picture of a supnation's fall includes also the absence of song and music. This was also told of the fall of Tyre (Is.24.8; Jer.25.10; 33.11; Ezek.26.13).

*Sorcery and Murder.* Babylon sinned through sorcery and murder (18.23-24). The practice of the black arts was common in John's world as it was during the time of Babylon. φαρμακεία should be understood against the Hebrew background כשף and as synonymous with wickedness and foreignness (Deut.18.9; 1 Enoch 65.6).<sup>75</sup> Nahum's usage suggests that through sorcery a ruling nation can beguile people through trade (Nah.3.4). Nahum also juxtaposes sorcery, wealth and harlotry.<sup>76</sup> Ladd writes: 'she [Babylon] had seduced other nations to feel that ultimate security could be

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<sup>74</sup> John is aware of the irony in the phrase 'great city'. Proposed here it could mean 'great' in the sense of exalted and successful, possibly a common phrase of the city of an empire, but it could mean arrogant and haughty used of someone who claims and lives as if God.

<sup>75</sup> Also pointed out by Esler, (1994) 139.

<sup>76</sup> Beale, (1998) 922.



found in wealth and luxury'.<sup>77</sup> It has been observed that accusing an outsider of sorcery was often motivated by the need to strengthen community boundaries. Esler writes: 'Rome is not, in fact, a source of any great difficulty for the Christian communities of Asia at this time. Rather it [sorcery] functions in the cycle of myth created in the work as a scapegoat for problems which are largely internal to the seven congregations'.<sup>78</sup> In other words, John blames internal misfortune on sorcery outside his own community boundaries. Still, central to John in accusing Babylon of sorcery, would be to depict Rome as one who had beguiled the nations by wealth. Moreover, by it Rome increased her profit and those who could fulfil her desires. Surely John had in mind Ezek.13.18 for his understanding of a sorcerer, one who deceived and disposed people of their own culture and religion all for her own profit (see above discussion relating to Assyria in chapter 1).

Babylon is said to have murdered the prophets, saints and all who have been slain upon the earth (6 Ezra 15.52-53). The blood cries from the ground for vengeance (cf. Gen.4.10; Job 14.18; Ezek.24.7; 6 Ezra 15.7-8; 2 Macc.8.3; 1 Enoch 9.3-5). It is argued that Jerusalem was known to have murdered the prophets. Indeed, this was a phrase used of Jerusalem (Jer.2.30). John presents all the murdered upon earth as slaughtered by Babylon, the ruling empire. Such could not be attributed to Jerusalem.

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<sup>77</sup> Ladd, (1978) 243.

<sup>78</sup> Esler, (1994) 145.

*The Mourners.* Prominent in chapter 18 is the merchant theme. It identifies six groups who lament the demise of the ruling nation because they will suffer the loss of a good buyer for their goods listed in vv.12-13.

i.. οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς (v. 9)

ii. οἱ ἔμποροι τῆς γῆς (v. 11)

iii. πᾶς κυβερνήτης (v. 17)

iv. ὁ ἐπὶ τόπον πλέων (v. 17)

v. ναῦται (v. 17)

vi.. ὅσοι τὴν θάλασσαν ἐργάζονται (v. 17)

#### **EZEKIEL 27**

\*Mariners and all the pilots stand on the shore and wail aloud over you and cry bitterly.

\*They cast dust on their heads . . . and they weep over you in bitterness . . .

\*They raise lamentation: ‘Who was destroyed like Tyre in the midst of the seas . . . you satisfied many peoples with your abundant wealth and merchandise . . .’<sup>79</sup>

You enriched the kings of the earth (27.33)

#### **REVELATION 18<sup>80</sup>**

\*Kings of the earth weep and wail over her when they see the smoke of her burning.

\*Shipmasters and seafaring men, sailors . . .

threw dust on their heads as they wept.

\*‘What city was like the great city . . . Alas, alas, for the great city where all who had ships grew rich by her wealth’.

Esler points out that the merchants and sailors are destroyed according to Ezek.27.27, whereas this is not stated in Rev.18. However, John is simply picking up on 27.28ff in which Ezekiel recounts those who stand away lamenting. On the whole, Rev.18 and

<sup>79</sup> Esler in his unpublished paper (p.19) notes there are differences that the merchants perish in Ezekiel but not in Rev.18. However, the differences are not as Esler states.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. 1 Enoch 101.

the theme of Babylon as wealthy and exploitative is developed not simply from Ezek.27, but also Ezek.16 and many of the texts of plunder and fall that were observed in chapter one.

i.. *Kings of the Earth* (18.9 cf. 16.14; 17.2, 14, 18; 19.19; 21.24) Tyre enriched the kings of the earth in the same way that John reports Rome did (27.33). However, the kings of the earth (vv.9-11) may be a conflation of ideas from especially Ps.2.2 and Deut.28.25 and indeed this may be an example of John correcting one text by another:

יְתִיצְבוּ מַלְכֵי אֶרֶץ עַל יְהוָה וְעַל מַשִּׁיחֹו (Ps.2.2)

**יִצָּב** appears often in the LXX as ἵστημι. It is possible that John used the traditions of the kings of the earth standing against (**יִצָּב**) God to correct the tradition in which it is said no one can stand against God or God's people (Deut.7.24, 9.2, 11.25; Josh.1.5; Job 41.10). Thus, John places the kings of the earth standing (ἑστηκότες<sup>81</sup>) far from where God is present, i.e. punishing Rome, because of fear that they will suffer the punishment of Rome. In other words, as Ps.2.2 presents the kings of the earth standing against God, John rather presents them standing far away from God and his punishment.

The aspect of standing far away may also have been influenced by Deut.28.25 in which Israel is warned that if she does not keep God's covenant she will become a horror to the kingdoms of the earth. The kings of the earth (Rev.18.9-11) are in horror of Babylon.

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<sup>81</sup> ἑστηκότες is in the perfect tense (v.10) whereas when used of the merchant in v. 15, the verb is used in the future. It may be chosen to emphasize the past and present aspect of what they are doing.

ii. *The Merchants and Sailors*. Merchants and sailors would be familiar to John as there is much evidence from Ephesus and other Aegean parts which John would know. However, it is not easy to account for the v.23:

οἱ ἔμποροὶ σου ἦσαν οἱ μεγιστᾶνες τῆς γῆς  
οἱ μεγιστᾶνες implies nobles or chief men. Traders and merchants were not considered among the noble class.<sup>82</sup> John develops his attack on Rome using Isaiah's oracle against Tyre:

אֲשֶׁר סַחֲרִיָּה שָׂרִים כִּנְעָנִיָּה נִכְבְּדֵי אֶרֶץ (Is.23.8)

This is the only connection between the *great* and *merchant* in the OT. John is commenting on how Rome had grown in luxurious material wealth to such an extent that the merchants themselves had become very rich or so they claimed in John's eyes.<sup>83</sup> As has been pointed out, wealth is not for John bad, rather it is having the right attitude and knowing from where wealth comes. However, this was not so with the merchants. Ladd writes of the 'great merchants': 'Her sin did not consist always in the fact of her wealth, but in the overweening pride and self-exaltation induced by her wealth'.<sup>84</sup> Indeed, the connection between pride and wealth was made explicit by Ezekiel:

'By your great wisdom in trade you have increased your wealth, and your heart has become proud in your wealth' (Ezek.28.5 cf. Jer.9.23-24).

*List of Merchandise*. The items listed are prominent in the OT (see chapter 1). The longest list of merchandise appears in Ezek.27.12-25a. Eichrodt reads the list in

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<sup>82</sup> Swete, (1922) 240.

<sup>83</sup> Bauckham, (1993a) 373.

<sup>84</sup> Ladd, (1978) 243.

Ezek.27.12-25a as secondary material added to an original funeral lament composed by a Jew with an intimate acquaintance with all the many branches of the Phoenician trade.<sup>85</sup> Consequently, John also may have attached a list particular to Roman trade. Ezek.27.12-25a reveals a detailed knowledge of what Tyre imports. However, the nature of trade does not change greatly. Many of the items in Ezek.27.12-25a are present in Rev.18 and the other items can also be seen elsewhere in the OT as items that were traded and seized by the ruling nations from defeated nations. Schoff writes of the articles: ‘They are chosen because of their previous appearance in the Hebrew scriptures and their suggestion of tabernacle, temple, palace, and priestly spoil’.<sup>86</sup> Bauckham has attempted to show that the merchandise would have been exported to Rome.<sup>87</sup> However, Provan has disputed Bauckham’s claims arguing that the items must be understood intertextually against their biblical background and that the list is not intended to have specific external reference to Rome in terms of economic critique.<sup>88</sup> However, it is unnecessary to separate John from his own social particularity, and moreover, to claim that John is not motivated by the need to provide an economic critique of Rome. Provan’s criticism of Bauckham does not take into account why John would choose to emphasize the ‘merchant theme’ if Rome was not known as such. Moreover, John could have easily structured his attack against Babylon on lines resembling Jeremiah’s attack on Babylon, thus making no mention of

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<sup>85</sup> Eichrodt, (1970) 387.

<sup>86</sup> Schoff, (1920) 69-70.

<sup>87</sup> Bauckham, (1993a) 338-383; he has been followed by Kraybill (1996), Beale, (1999) 910 and Knight, (1999) 121. However, it is interesting to note that Schoff, (1920) 103 when comparing the list in Rev.18 with the lists of the commerce of Rome in Pliny and Periplus, was left in no doubt that Rev.18.12-13 is not a specific list relevant to Rome, so also Provan.

the trade theme (chapters 50-51). Yet, Provan is right when he quotes Thompson that John's perceived crisis with Rome is primarily connected with John's own perspective on Roman society.<sup>89</sup> However, the perspective is often testified in social reality; John was critiquing a valid abuse of power manifested in items imported to Rome. Although Provan argues for the Hebrew background, yet he does not provide a thorough study of the items against their Hebrew background. Provan observes that if John's list was firmly based on knowledge of the particularity of Roman imports, he could have chosen more obvious items than cattle, sheep and wheat.<sup>90</sup> Indeed, supporting Provan, even gold, according to Pliny the Elder, comes 'scarcely tenth' in the list of valuables and silver 'almost as low as twentieth' (Pliny, *NH.* 36.204).<sup>91</sup> Yet gold and silver were prominent items of the rich and ruling nations in the OT thus again supporting Provan. Provan asks if Bauckham's interpretation is correct would John not be expected to have included exotic foodstuffs on his list? Provan points out that only 13 of John's list of 28 cargoes occur in Pliny's list of costly products.<sup>92</sup> Provan and Schoff, however, overestimate the differences between Rev.18.12-13 and Pliny's list. John, like the Hebrew prophets, is an acute observer of society and John would have known items that were being shipped out of Ephesus to Rome and he would have been aware of particular incidences of suffering that such imports would have created.

However, it is unnecessary to emphasize too much that John has included every item in reference to a particular situation and he may have been influenced by the OT

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<sup>88</sup> Provan, (1996) 87; also Schoff, (1920); Buchanan, (1993) and Moyise, (1995) 74.

<sup>89</sup> Provan, (1996) 97.

<sup>90</sup> Provan, (1996) 86.

<sup>91</sup> A point that Knight, (1999) 121 fails to mention when he writes: 'Gold is an obvious luxury'.

<sup>92</sup> Provan, (1996) 86.

for some of the items.<sup>93</sup> This will be seen in terms of horses and sheep. Bauckham writes: 'The first century was the period in which Roman aristocracy had acquired large sheep and cattle ranches (*latifundia*) both in Italy and, by conquest and confiscation, in the provinces'.<sup>94</sup> In addition he notes that such ranches were being filled with improved breeds (the Epirote) from Greece, for which he cites Strabo and Varro for evidence. However, his point is not in harmony with Garnsey and Saller, who point out that there is no definition or technical discussion which records actually what a *latifundium* is. They point out that it is highly improbable that there were many large ranchers specializing in animal husbandry. Varro had 800 of his own sheep, but he fails to cite another, which to Garnsey and Saller suggests pastoralism was practised on a modest scale.<sup>95</sup> However, even if Bauckham is right and the importing of improved breeds was more common than Garnsey and Saller suggest, how aware of this breed of cattle would John be? According to Strabo such breeds were imported from Greece and not Asia Minor (Strabo 7.7.5, 12). John was based in Asia Minor and it is highly unlikely that John was aware of even a large import of special breeds of cattle to the *latifondisti* in Italy, and he certainly would not be aware of the import of small quantities. Therefore, it is probable that John's inclusion of sheep and cattle is influenced by the OT (see discussion below). Overall, in John's eyes his own particular social setting resembled that of Tyre's trade which resulted in suffering (Ezek.28.16) as also Assyria and Babylon (see Nahum 3).

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<sup>93</sup> Beale, (1998) 909 also points that the items not in Ezek.27 'reflect the actual products of trade at John's time'. Interestingly, Moyise, (1995) 74 is more sceptical about this when he writes that 'it is unclear how he would know such a thing'.

<sup>94</sup> Bauckham, (1993a) 364; Knight, (1999) 122.

<sup>95</sup> Garner & Saller, (1996) 68.

Distinctive to this argument is that the merchandise was seen as the opulent booty with which Rome constructs her sacred places as did Egypt, Jerusalem, Assyria, Tyre, Babylon, Persia and Greece (see chapter 1). In addition, they are symbols of her importance, and independence, by which she shows that all are subject to her. This is specifically done through the imperial cult and Rome's obvious consumption of merchandise. However, the items chosen in chapter 18 would have been seen against the Hebrew background as well as the particularity of Roman trade. They function to establish the similarity between Rome and former ruling nations through observing similar attitudes towards wealth and the consequences of those attitudes. Bauckham argues that knowledge of trade in the first century Roman empire was primary to the inclusion of the items on the list. Rather, he presents Rome as a large importer of goods, goods which John saw in the light of goods plundered throughout the OT.

*Gold, silver, jewels and pearls* (see Ezek.16.8-15; Hag.2.7; Dan.11.38, 43; 1 Enoch 94.6 ff). Gold, silver and jewels are items in the OT of precious things and were associated with the temple and plunder (Ex.3.22; 25.1-9). μαργαρίτης is listed as an expensive item (Pliny *NH.* 9.106) and belongs with other precious items: gold, silver, and jewels. It was connected, as with the other precious things, with a nation's religious identity. In Isaiah it is said that the plundered Israel will be restored and that her walls will be built with precious stones (Is.54.12; Tg.Ps.Jon. on Is.54.12 has 'timbers in pearls'). The argument here is not that the new Jerusalem will actually be built with pearls or precious stones, but expresses the restoration of Jerusalem, by God, in splendour. The new Jerusalem of Revelation is said to have twelve gates made from μαργαρίτης (21.21) and thus contrasted with the beast (17.4). It appears also in



18.16 in which Rome is presented as one who is clothed with jewels and pearls which suggest Rome's sacred buildings and temples or the imperial cult festivals, especially in view of the probable background in Hos.2.13 in which it is said that Israel bedecked herself in expensive stones to participate in Baal festivals (cf. Jer.4.30). The important contrast suggests that what once belonged to Jerusalem now belongs to Rome. Also, the picture of Tyre as a ship bedecked in expensive items from all of which the temple was made (Ezek.27.1-9). As Jerusalem was once bedecked in wealth, so now is Rome. The acquiring of pearls also according to Pliny resulted in suffering.<sup>96</sup> Pliny acknowledges how Lollia Paulina, the consort of Gaius 'obtained [pearls] with spoils from the provinces' (NH. 9.117). Precious things were seen as important items of spoil in war (2 Chron.20.25). It is clear that merchants and sailors would have profited and increased in number because of Rome's love of pearls.

*Fine Linen, Purple, Silk, Scarlet* (All are expensive items, see Jer.10.9). Linen it will be seen was especially connected with plunder. Jeremiah in an acted parable bought a linen waistcloth to wear, and then hid it by the Euphrates (Jer.13.1-7). When Jeremiah returned he found it spoiled. The importance of the linen is not necessarily that it was expensive, but it was the most intimate. Thus its destruction symbolised to what extent Judah had been humbled. John depicts Rome as possessing in abundance even items of clothing.

Pliny mentions σιρικόν as a costly product (NH.36.204). All items would be used for clothing, that which Israel took as booty (2 Chron.20.25). Silk appears only in Rev.18 in the NT. σιρικόν does not occur in the LXX. In the Hebrew it occurs as

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<sup>96</sup> Bauckham, (1993a) 353-354.

משי. משי which was the clothing of Jerusalem (Ezek.16.10, 13 cf Rev. 18.16):

Ezek.16.10

Rev.18.16

I clothed you also with embroidered cloth and  
shod you with leather (תחש), I swathed you in  
fine linen and covered you with silk.

Alas, alas, for the great city, that was clothed in  
fine linen, in purple and scarlet, bedecked with  
gold, with jewels, and with pearls.

And I decked you with ornaments, and put  
bracelets on your arms...

Thus you were decked with gold and silver; and  
your raiment was of fine linen, and silk, and  
embroidered cloth.

This belongs originally within Jerusalem traditions which Jerusalem no longer possesses, but Rome now does.<sup>97</sup> There may also be a connection with the items from which the veil of the temple and the attire of the high priest was made.<sup>98</sup> As has been pointed out, the Exodus narrative depicts the making of the tabernacle from goods plundered from Egypt (see chapter 1). Josephus mention the temple veil (*Ant.*5.5.4 or 5.212-213) which has its origins in Ex. 26.9 (cf. 2 Chron.3.14). Linen is associated with the veil. Ezek.16.10 is also a possible background. The important point is that which Yahweh has given (cf. Hos.2.8) and can take (Ezek.16.39), a consequence of not keeping the covenant (Lev.26; Deut.28; Jer.9.23-24). When this is taken booty, a nation suffers its ultimate defeat as Jerusalem did in 70CE. Antiochus Epiphanes in

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<sup>97</sup> Provan suggest that the Hebrew literary antecedents would more likely lead to identifying Jerusalem.

There is much to commend this position, especially in terms of the literary antecedents. However, I think the literary antecedents are indeed present, but that such traditions were applied to a new ruling power.

<sup>98</sup> Chilton, (1987) 456; Barker, (1991) 106.

169 BCE also took a temple veil among his spoils (1 Macc.1.21-22).<sup>99</sup> Further, the Jerusalem connection would lead to John's depiction of Rome 'clothed in fine linen, in purple and scarlet, bedecked with gold, with jewels, and with pearls' (18.16-17), the very things with which Jerusalem had herself been bedecked and which Rome had plundered from Jerusalem. Also, according to Josephus, silk was the extravagant dress of Roman soldiers (*War* 7.126).<sup>100</sup>

Parts of the sanctuary were made from κοκκίνοϛ (see Josephus in his description of the inner temple; also Ex.26.31). It was part of the veil and high priest's outfit (Ex.28.33). It is associated with well-being and with luxury (2 Sam.1.24), and God will withdraw it from the haughty daughters of Zion, plundered by Babylon who seeks her life:

'And you O desolate one, what do you mean that you dress in scarlet' (Jer.4.30)

Jesus is dressed in a scarlet robe and mocked as being the king of the Jews because of his appearance. This suggests that scarlet was associated with royalty (Matt.27.28). There may also be a connection with the attire of conquering soldiers, thus emphasising again marauding and plundering armies (Nah.2.3). Importing scarlet was a great insult to a leading nation as it provided for their religious buildings and clothed their armies.

*Building Items: Citrus wood, Ivory, Costly items of Wood, Bronze, Iron and Marble.*

παν ξύλον θύϊνον. θύϊνον is wood of the tree θυία, a sweet scented African tree

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<sup>99</sup> Barker, (1991) 107.

<sup>100</sup> Bauckham, (1993b) 355.

belonging to the Cypress family which includes cedars, cypresses, citrus and thujas.<sup>101</sup> Solomon's temple was built from cedar (1 Kings 5.6-10) and the second temple (Ezra 3.7) and the chariots were built from cedar (Song 3.9). Wood of any kind is seen as the prize of a conqueror (Lam.5.4):

‘We must pay for the water we drink, the wood must be bought’, it is also said that ‘boys stagger under loads of wood’ (Lam.5.13 cf Ezek.39.10)).

μαρμάρως Marble (אבני שיש) is a major feature of the temple (Josephus *War* 5.190; 1 Chron.29.2). Associated with marble is again plunder, inasmuch as the temple was destroyed. Marble was important to Rome and was imported especially from Asia. In a letter to Trajan, Pliny the Younger points out that the transportation of marble across land was very expensive and demanded much labour (*Ep.*10.41.2). Moreover, Pliny the Elder treats the private use of marble as an absurd and indefensible luxury (*NH.*36.2-8, 48-51, 110, 125).

*Cinnamon, spice, incense, myrrh and frankincense.* Although κιννάμωμον is not mentioned in Ezekiel 27, it is associated with cassia (Ezek.27.19 cf. Ps.45.8). κιννάμωμον was used as a sacred anointing oil for use in the tent of meeting and the ark of the testimony. The anointing oil was made from myrrh, incense and cinnamon (Ex.30.23). These three with the frankincense allude to the anointing oil. Consequently, cinnamon was imported to Jerusalem for its regular temple service.<sup>102</sup> It is to be assumed that the destruction meant that cinnamon was no longer used. The conquering king of Israel will be robed in garments fragrant with myrrh, aloes and

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<sup>101</sup> Johnson, (1975) 102

<sup>102</sup> Applebaum, (1976a) 674.

cassia (Ps.45.8). Moreover, it was certainly enjoyed by Romans. *κιννάμωμον* is listed by Pliny as one of the most expensive items on earth. According to Pliny the Elder, cinnamon was also used in religious ceremony (*NH.* 12.93).<sup>103</sup> It was also used at Roman funerals (cf. Jer.34.5).

*ἄμωμον* does not appear in LXX Ezekiel 27.22, but *ἡδύσμος* (LXX) does as *בִּשְׁמִם*. Esler makes much of this when he argues that John has left out Ezekiel's cooking spices and emphasised the use of spice for incense.<sup>104</sup> *ἡδύσμος* appears as mint in Matt.23.23 and Lk.11.42 thus supporting Esler's point. However, it generally refers to something 'sweet smelling'. Significantly, it appears in Ex.30.34, for *סִסְמָן*, a spice used in incense, as an ingredient from which incense was made (cf. Lev.4.7, 16.12). *בִּשְׁמִם* appears as a luxury in the part of King Ahasuerus' court wherein the girls would be purified with *בִּשְׁמִם* for six months (Esth.2.12). *ἄμωμον* appears nowhere else in the NT or LXX. Spices probably went under different names according to the time and it is possible that John is simply applying his own familiar term for spices in his list, thus indicating that John is aware of the particular spice of his time. Spices were used in Jewish and Roman festivals and provided much money to the exporters, especially N. India. 1 Kings reports that Sheba came to Jerusalem bearing spices. Again, the destruction of a nation's sacred places would mean a nation being dispossessed of their spices or the need for them. Especially since spices figure within the OT *vis-à-vis* the burial of kings of Judah (Jer. 34.5), it would prevent a nation giving respect to the dead.

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<sup>103</sup> Kraybill, (1996) 105.

<sup>104</sup> Esler, (1991 unpub. 20.

*Wine, oil, fine flour and wheat.*<sup>105</sup> *σεμίδαλις* appears only in Rev 18.13 in the NT. The word suggests fine wheaten flour. Pliny reports that *σεμίδαλις* (Lat. *similago*) was made from the most exalted wheat: '*similago ex tritico fit laudatissimo*' (Nat. Hist. 18.21). It occurs in the LXX for סֶלֶת. It was ground from the inner kernels of the wheat thus making it more expensive. *σεμίδαλις* figures very much in the Levitical sacrifices (Lev.2). Moreover, Abraham is said to have fed God himself when he appeared at Mamre with fine flour (Gen.18.6). Rome supplied free wheat for the poor of Rome, so this would have involved importing, and many from the provinces would have resented this.<sup>106</sup> Provan argues that the food items are not items of extravagance and luxury.<sup>107</sup> However, food is a central item of plunder and a nation can be kept low with its absence or shortage (2 Kings 7; Jer.12.10; Ezek.16.19; 1 Enoch 96.5; cf. Rev.6.6). In Ezek.16.19 Israel is depicted similarly to Babylon in Rev.18. She is plentiful in expensive clothing (Ezek.16.10); jewellery (v.12); in gold, silver, fine linen, fine flour, honey and oil (v.13); and fine flour (v.19). With these items she played the harlot as Babylon does in Rev.18. However, such items will be plundered (vv.38-44). Trito-Isaiah reflects this when he looks to the fulfilment of God's promises:

‘I will not again give your *grain* to be food for your enemies, and foreigners shall not drink your *wine* for which you have laboured’ (Is.62.8 cf. Is.65.22).

For Jeremiah the restoration of grain, wine and oil are crucial for happiness:

‘and they shall be radiant over the goodness of Yahweh, over the grain, the wine, and the oil

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<sup>105</sup> Schoff, (1920) 101 observes how these items are connected with the temple,

<sup>106</sup> Garnsey and Saller, (1987) 86.

<sup>107</sup> Provan, (1996) 86.

and over the young of the flock and the herd' (Jer.31.12).<sup>108</sup>

Thus, those who had *σεμίδαλις* were seen in John's eyes as the plunderers who did not work for their bread. This is illustrated in a letter from an unidentifiable emperor to the Ephesians:

'first the imperial city should have a bounteous supply of wheat...and then the other cities may also receive provision in plenty'.<sup>109</sup>

Whether or not this was a fair policy due to the very large population in Rome, it most certainly might be perceived as unfair among some provincials, i.e., for example, John.<sup>110</sup> Especially, when they consumed the best wheat. Wheat also appears in 6.6 in which the prices of wheat are very high. Sweet suggests Domitian's edict in 92 CE is alluded to in which soil only fit for vines was used to grow wheat and barley, therefore the policy would have been disastrous. However, more likely is the general Hebrew background of plunder. Ezekiel reports the words of Yahweh:

'behold I will break the staff of bread in Jerusalem; they shall eat bread by the weight and with fearfulness; and they shall drink water by measure and in dismay' (Ezek.4.16).

Also Leviticus 26 reports the importance of obeying God, but a refusal will result in a shortage of daily needs which comes from invasion by an enemy (26.25-26).<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Wine itself may have not been a luxury item, but it is likely that the author of Revelation has in mind expensive wine which was a luxury in the same way that the author of the Wisdom of Solomon castigates not only those who want expensive ointments but also expensive wine (2.7).

<sup>109</sup> See Garnsey & Saller, (1996) 99.

<sup>110</sup> Finley, (1985) 198, adds that Rome was a huge importer of grain.

<sup>111</sup> Mounce, (1977) 155, Ladd, (1978) 100 does well not to fall into the trap of particularising 6.6 with reference to Domitian's edict of 92 CE (so Hemer, p.45; Morris, p.106). Their position seems untenable as it is not possible to say why wine and oil would not be harmed. Morris suggests that they were luxuries which the rich continued to enjoy, while the poor did not have the basics. Wine

*Cattle, sheep, horses, chariots, slaves.* κτήνος in LXX usually translates בְּהֵמָה. The ownership of cattle and, indeed, sheep, signify the economic situation the owner occupies (cf. Gen.12.16; 20.14; 24.35; 26.14). The dominating theme associated with cattle is that of plunder. King Jehoshaphat is said to have plundered many cattle (2 Chron.20.25; cf. Deut.2.35, 3.7; 28.18; Is.13.20; Ezek.38.12-13; et al). In describing the fall of Judah Jeremiah shows that the absence of cattle is a reason to lament (Jer.9.10). In looking to the time of restoration, Jeremiah depicts the return of the people of God who will be rejoicing over the young flock and the herd (Jer.31.12; 33.12). The important stipulation in Deut.28 regarding the rewards and punishment include cattle. If the Israelites obey, there will be an increase of cattle (28.4, 11 see also Is. 13.20).

Although not a commodity of wealth to Pliny, the OT saw κτήνος as a status symbol of affluence. Thus the inclusion of cattle and sheep in Rev.18 highlights the plunderous and powerful nature of one who possesses many sheep and cattle..

ῥέδη does not figure in Pliny's list of expensive items and occurs nowhere else in the NT or LXX. Liddell and Scott describe it as a 'wagon' from the Latin *raeda* which suggests a 'four-wheeled travelling-carriage'. It is unlikely that John chooses the word to highlight war chariots (as Esler argues), rather, he would have used ἄρμα (war-chariot Liddell and Scott, cf. Rev.9.9). In the OT possession of wagons and chariots suggests power and wealth. According to Ikeda: 'fine chariots and horses were among the items most sought by all the princes of the ancient Near East and were among the most desirable gifts to be expected'.<sup>112</sup> He points out that they displayed the princes'

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and oil were not luxuries but staple food, the famine was limited (so Sweet [1979] 140).

<sup>112</sup> Ikeda, (1982) 221.



glory and status in processions and ceremonies, not for the battleground.<sup>113</sup> This would certainly be the case with Solomon who was not a man of war. 1 Sam.8.11 points out that chariots were looked upon as symbols of the worldly splendour of a king. Connected with this is that chariots and horses need people to operate them. Thus, the possession of horses and chariots is connected with the possession of slaves and the plunder that comes when one has a powerful king. 1 Kings 10.26 emphasizes the might of Solomon over the kings of the earth with reference to fourteen hundred chariots and twelve thousand horsemen as well as gold and silver. Jeremiah tells Judah that if she listens to Yahweh she will be great, and a sign of this is the presence of kings riding in chariots and on horses (Jer.17.24-25). In addition to highlighting the glory of a king, chariots and horses were associated with plunder (1 Chron.18.4). However, the reference is to war chariots. John is more concerned to highlight the power, glory and wealth of Rome gained as plunder from other nations. In this case, Rome would be the recipient of gifts from defeated nations as well as the trade which their merchants were bringing. The wealthy and powerful, for a reader of the OT, would have horses and chariots. John may have had in mind:

‘there you [Jerusalem court official] shall die, and there shall be your splendid chariots’ (Is. 22.18).<sup>114</sup>

Bauckham’s observations reinforce and particularize John’s setting when he points out that *ρέδνη* could be silver-plated and gilt chariots (see Pliny *NH.* 33.140 and Martial 3.62).<sup>115</sup> Therefore, the word indicates a form of transport for the wealthy. A Jew

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<sup>113</sup> Ikeda, (1982) 221.

<sup>114</sup> Kaiser, (1980) 150 suggests the ‘you’ is the ‘Jerusalem court official’.

<sup>115</sup> Bauckham, (1993a) 365.

living in the first century would know of the chariots and horses of Rome and would compare with the days of Solomon. But for John all would be lost unless the name of God is praised.

### 5. *Summary and Conclusions*

John expected hostility from the authorities, and this was a present fact for some, certainly including himself. Arrest and suffering at the hands of Rome and those who compromise was actively sought, explicable in terms of *labelling-deviance theory*. Domitian's particular policies brought their own particular problems to a community that saw itself as heirs to the hopes of Israel and witnesses in the tradition of the prophets in giving testimony before officialdom. Compromise with Rome was a real fear, and one that must be resisted. John saw the consequences of Rome's rule. It was violent and plundering like the nations before. Domitian's reign seems to present a situation in which compromise was welcomed, and many from the synagogues and churches would be tempted to apostatise.

The thesis has been that John was motivated to attack Rome through the universal language of his tradition.<sup>116</sup> He presented Rome like the previous ruling or exploitative nations, this included Jerusalem who had exploited according to its own narratives. Thus Rome was depicted as one who beguiled the nations by her wealth, who plundered the nations, who murdered peoples. In John's oracle he announces war on Rome and anticipates victory and salvation.

Wealth and prosperity are not evil in Revelation. John sees the future fulfilment when Rome's wealth will be taken and God will establish his community in wealth and

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<sup>116</sup> To this extent there is agreement with Provan.

prosperity. This is indeed prefigured in the Lamb in Rev.5.12 who has already received prosperity. Rome will no longer be the central place that consumes the world's wealth, the new Jerusalem will be the centre to which the kings of the earth bring their glory (Rev.21.24).

Ultimately, John critiques the values of a Godless world that are based on power and violence. He shows that violent powers will be replaced by the next violent power in the same way that they seized power for themselves. John hopes for a break in the spiral of violence, and that the violence will cease and the new Jerusalem become a reality.

The response and attitude of Revelation to its environment is not unlike Gandhi's.

1. It is one of non-co-operation.
2. It understands violence as a spiral which increases in every generation dominated by an ungodly power that seeks total power and immortality for itself.
3. Like Gandhi, Revelation is not afraid to see the fight against violence as a war in which it hopes to conquer. The victory, however, will not be through weapons of war, but in its faithfulness to God, seen in the principles of nonviolence, love and compassion. The issue of war is also a religious one in which the way of life upon earth is an attack on God's honour as also for Gandhi.

PART II

A STUDY IN FUNCTIONAL CHRISTOLOGY

## JESUS AS FAITHFUL WITNESS

In chapters 3 and 4 faithful witness themes in the OT and later Jewish literature were assessed. Such provide a broad context from which John drew for his presentation of Jesus as a faithful witness. In this chapter the more precise phrase ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστός will be examined along with the precise antecedents to the phrase in the OT. Yet the phrase cannot be separated from the broader contexts in Jewish literature.

1. *OT Background to ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστός*

עֵד occurs some sixty-seven times in the OT. Most common is the role of the witness in the court-setting of a person who has firsthand knowledge of an event or testifies on the basis of a report of another (Lev.5.1). The nation of Israel was viewed as God's witness (Is.43.9, 10; 44.8, 9), yet the ultimate witness is God (1 Sam.12.5; Job 16.19; Jer.29.3; 42.5; Mal.3.5). Those who transgress God's covenant could be put to death only on the evidence of two witnesses (Deut.17.6; cf. Rev.11). However, in Deutero-Isaiah only one witness is needed, namely, God's servant. For example, the witness is known as the servant (Is.44.1 cf. 44.8); it is only Israel that is needed as a witness to establish the truth - that God is one - against the nations' attacks on God's honour. Also God's anointed is like a faithful witness in the skies (Ps.89.38b cf. 2 Sam.7.13-14; Ps.89.1-4; cf. Rev.3.14):

וְעֵד בְּשֹׁחַק נֶאֱמַר (MT)

καὶ ὁ μάρτυς ἐν οὐρανῷ πιστός (LXX)

There are various possibilities as to the originally intended identity of עֵד. Eaton

suggests it is the Davidic kings themselves who are to make a perpetual witness.<sup>1</sup> Those immersed in the literature and temple liturgy of the Bible might have conflated the text with texts from Deutero-Isaiah in which witness was applied to God's servant (cf. Is.55.4).<sup>2</sup>

In Isaiah 50-55 there is a controversy between Yahweh and the false gods. God is represented by Israel and the world by the pagan nations.<sup>3</sup> Israel is to be a light to the nations (42.6-7; cf. 43.10,12; 44.8). The peoples are to be gathered together (41.1) and judgement will follow (41.11). Judgement is the justice which will proceed from the actions of God's witness (42.1,4). In 42.1-4 the witness/servant is portrayed as one who is an example of suffering patience. In the context of the court-setting God gives his enemies a chance to present their case through their witnesses (43.9-10). However, they have no case and God's witnesses are charged to declare the truth so that justice might follow. In Is.50.4-9 and 52.13-53.12 suffering is introduced as a consequence of the faithful testimony that the servant gives. Although the servant is not predicated as a 'witness', the servant functions similarly to that of the servant in the preceding songs. In 50.4-9 the language is of the law-court (vv.8-9) and the servant is one who argues the case of God (v.4) and suffers as a result of the word of God that he must speak (vv.6-7) but who will be vindicated by God (v.8). Trites observes that Israel is described as God's servant in terms which parallel her role as God's witness (41.9 and 43.10,12).<sup>4</sup> Von Rad writes: 'when Deutero-Isaiah describes Israel as a "witness" for

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<sup>1</sup> Eaton, (1967) 221; Bauckham, (1993b) 73; Beale, (1999) 191-192.

<sup>2</sup> Bauckham, (1993b) 73 adds that John was 'inspired by the prophecies of Deutero-Isaiah'.

<sup>3</sup> Trites, (1977) 45.

<sup>4</sup> Trites, (1977) 39-40, 47; further, he points out that the juxtaposition between God's servant and witness is seen, also, in Job where Job functions as witness in taking God's side (1.21; 2.10; 42.8)

the nations (Is.43.10; 44.8; 55.4), he is not thinking of sending out messengers to them [the nations]. In the prophet's mind Israel is thought of rather as a sign of which the Gentiles are to become aware'.<sup>5</sup> Von Rad plays down the idea of a missionary being sent to proclaim a message. However, the witness is more than just a sign. Trites writes: 'It is the task of the witness not only to attest the facts but also to convince the opposite side of the truth of them'.<sup>6</sup> Caird comments that the primary aim of the witness 'was not to convince judge and jury, but to convince the adversary, so that he would withdraw his own case and acknowledge defeat'.<sup>7</sup> In other words, it is the hope of the witness of God to see the rejection of the beast and the turning to God. The beast is seen to lose honour and God is seen to have gained honour before the witnesses.

*Faithful witnesses in the OT and in the NT: Continuity or Discontinuity?* Lampe suggests that, although influenced by the Hebrew tradition, the Christian understanding of faithful witness is distinctive. He sees suffering and death, in the OT, resulting from a defensive aspect, whereas in the Christian's case it was not merely a matter of passive resistance, but of active testifying to the gospel. He writes: 'The Christian was essentially a missionary, and martyrdom was for him the most supreme

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and is described as 'my servant' (1.8; 2.3; 42.7,8).

<sup>5</sup> Von Rad, (1975), vol.2, 249.

<sup>66</sup> Trites, (1977) 46. Also Bauckham, (1993b) 105 observes that witness functions at winning people from lies and illusion to the truth. However, he points out the double-edge to witness: 'witness which is rejected becomes evidence against those who reject it'. This will be looked at later.

<sup>7</sup> Caird, (1980) 158.

and most effective mode of evangelism'.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, Von Campenhausen argues that martyrdom can only be spoken of where the suffering is expressly related to the idea of witness bearing, and not to loyalty to the Law, as in the OT.<sup>9</sup> Hengel writes that there is no superhuman transfiguration of the martyr because it is completely alien to the OT.<sup>10</sup> Such are the observations of some scholars.

However, it has been seen in the discussion *vis-à-vis* the OT, that the nodal point for Christian developments of missionary activity is present, especially in respect of the prophets. This thesis proposes that Revelation advocates that witnesses of Jesus should be active in proclaiming the gospel through maintaining the way of Jesus in nonviolence and readiness to die, thus being witnesses of God to the nations hoping that they, too, will come to accept Jesus' testimony as truth. Therefore, *a faithful witness is understood as a middleman of God before someone else*.<sup>11</sup> Revelation draws upon its tradition and develops it. The OT is influential upon John both in providing examples of heroes within the tradition, but also heroes who were active in witnessing to the nations in their faithfulness to God. The OT does not simply contain traditions that are introspective and concerned simply with social control through advocating separation from the world, but within the OT are the seeds of an ideology in which God's servants, in their faithfulness, aim to bring about a transformation of the antagonist to live the principles God so established - God's middlemen to the world.

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<sup>8</sup> Lampe, (1981) 118.

<sup>9</sup> Von Campenhausen, (1964) 3.

<sup>10</sup> Hengel, (1981) 7.

<sup>11</sup> O'Hagan, (1974) 94.



## 2. ὁ μάρτυς in Acts

ὁ μάρτυς occurs in the NT, especially in the forensic sense (Matt.18.16, 26.65; Mk.14.63 *et al*). In Acts 1.8 the resurrected Jesus commissions his disciples to be μου μάρτυρες in Jerusalem and to the ends of the earth (cf. 22.15). It is clear that the role of Jesus' followers is to testify to the world so that the world can be confronted by the truth that they have received from God. In 1.22 the truth is the resurrection of Jesus to which a witness must testify (cf. 2.32; 3.15; 5.32). Jesus' followers are witnesses to the whole life of Jesus and all that he did resulting in his death (10.39 cf. 1 Pet.5.1). For Luke, these are not only those who are eye-witnesses to Jesus' ministry, but also those to whom God has given the gift of being a witness: in 26.16 Luke equates the roles of servant and witness; Paul sees his role as servant and witness even though he had not been with Jesus from the beginning. Marshall sees the influence of Isaiah 42.6f on 26.18, in which the servant is to be a light to the nations.<sup>12</sup> Luke is also influenced by the forensic use of ὁ μάρτυς in 6.13 in which Stephen is set up as the counterpart of Jesus who like Jesus is challenged on the same charges by false witnesses (cf. 7.58).<sup>13</sup> The fate of Stephen is that of a martyr as with Jesus. His martyrdom is intimately connected with his role as witness. In 22.20 the connection *vis-à-vis* Stephen between witness and death is made explicit by Luke in Paul's speech.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Marshall, (1980) 396.

<sup>13</sup> Blaiklock, (1977) 78 makes this connection quoting Rackham: 'Like Jesus, Stephen was accused of blasphemy, and by false witnesses; even the charge ran in almost the same words, "destroy the temple"'.

<sup>14</sup> Trites, (1977) 66f points out that *witness* here is beginning to be used in the sense of 'martyr' cf. Marshall, (1980) 357.

### 3. ὁ μάρτυς in Revelation

Only here in the New Testament is ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστός used of Jesus as a title. In 1.5 it appears as the first of three titles used for Jesus (cf. 3.14 for Jesus) and of Antipas in 2.13 (cf. 11.3 and 17.6 in which only ὁ μάρτυς is used). Trites observes a five stage diachronic development whereby μάρτυς became synonymous with ‘martyr’.<sup>15</sup> He observes that witness originally belongs in the court of law with no expectation of death. In its final stage such an idea of witness disappears and it refers only to martyrdom. Certainly μάρτυς undergoes a change in meaning from the forensic (Deutero-Isaiah) to the martyr understanding (*Martyrdom of Polycarp*). However, Trites’ application of a five stage diachronic development of μάρτυς is unnecessary. Deutero-Isaiah, for example, is evidence that suffering and death resulted from the testimony that a witness might give. Brownlee writes: ‘the association of מַעֲדָה with the suffering servant perhaps prepared the way for the early use of ὁ μάρτυς in the sense of martyr’.<sup>16</sup> It has been shown in Chapters Three and Four that suffering and death may be a consequence of delivering a testimony. Therefore, it can be said that ‘witness’ and ‘suffering’ are related at a much earlier stage that Trites would seem to allow.

#### *Testimony Given*

ἡ μαρτυρία is the testimony that a witness would give. It occurs as a distinguishing characteristic establishing that which all who follow Christ have in common, that is the testimony of Jesus (19.10). On five occasions ἡ μαρτυρία is qualified with Jesus (1.2 [Christ is added]; 1.9; 12.17; 19.10 [twice]; 20.4). Beale adds: ‘the word group is used

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<sup>15</sup> Trites, (1973) 72-73 for the list of categories.

<sup>16</sup> Brownlee, (1957) 208.

repeatedly in conjunction with the deaths of Christians'.<sup>17</sup> It is often associated with death resulting from giving witness to God (6.9; 11.7; 12.11, 17; 20.4). On three occasions it means the testimony given by the witness (6.9; 11.7; 12.11) and in 6.9 and 11.7 the witnesses have been martyred because of their testimony.

### *Witness as Martyr*

ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστός suggests the court setting where evidence is given and justice established. God's witness, associated with the Davidic king, and in Deutero-Isaiah with Israel, is thus applied to the new Davidic King, Jesus, and his followers, the new Israel. The title is clearly influenced by Ps.89.38 in which the unending witness of the moon is compared to the unending reign of David's seed.<sup>18</sup> John probably links together Ps.89.38 and Is.55.4 (cf. Rev.3.14).<sup>19</sup> The king's role is establishing God's justice which is central to the role of God's chosen (Ps.45.4,7; 72.1-2,4,12; 110.6); John's concern here is to depict Jesus as a witness in the forensic sense rather than a Davidic king. In being a witness he is depicted as one who is concerned to establish justice similarly to the expectation of the Davidic king. John has not necessarily in mind church members standing trial before the court; rather, John may have in mind Jesus' trials before the Sanhedrin and Pilate. Moreover, the law-court language is a metaphorical system used to develop the idea of challenge and response and the gaining of honour in which his community are to set themselves against the challenger (cf. Mk.13.9; Lk.21.13) and defend God's offended honour. The law-court for the

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<sup>17</sup> Beale, (1999) 190.

<sup>18</sup> Beale, (1999) 190.

<sup>19</sup> Sweet, (1979) 65; Schüssler Fiorenza, (1972) 199-200; Beale, (1999) 192.

Israelites was the only context in which they experienced a systematic quest for truth.<sup>20</sup> In Revelation the conflict is between the beast, who tempts and seduces the world, and God's witnesses, who defend God's honour and seek the transformation of those who have been seduced by the beast. In *labelling-deviance theory*, the witness can accept and embrace the accusations of the challenger as a way of gaining honour. One such response is to die rather than apostatise.

a. 1.1-5. Clearly from the juxtaposition with 'firstborn from the dead', 'faithful witness' is seen in relation to Jesus' death. The content of the ἀποκάλυψις which Jesus received refers to what is to happen soon (v.1). In v.2 John's credentials to be called a servant of God are stated in that he testified (ἐμαρτύρησεν) to the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. Holtz identifies τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ with the witness *to* Jesus, and his death, rather than the testimony which Jesus gives; thus Holtz acknowledged no role by 'forensic witness' to Jesus.<sup>21</sup> Lampe, also taking the phrase as an objective genitive reads τὴν μαρτυρίαν as synonymous with εὐαγγέλιον.<sup>22</sup> The phrase, therefore, could be read similarly to Mk.1.1. However, Mk.1.1 could be read objectively or subjectively, referring to Jesus either as the good news or as the announcer of it. Whether the phrase in Revelation is meant as an objective or subjective genitive does not really matter. If an objective aspect is intended, the witness about Jesus would be about his role as a witness in proclaiming God's message. It is possible that John has in mind εὐαγγέλιον. Yet, there can be no

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<sup>20</sup> Caird, (1980) 158.

<sup>21</sup> Holtz, (1962) 56.

<sup>22</sup> Lampe, (1981) 135

certainty that good news and testimony are synonymous. John clearly was able to distinguish between the two (cf. 1.2 and 14.6). The preferred interpretation here is that John appropriates ‘testimony’ to emphasise the conflict through the law-court, in which Jesus gave testimony in his life as God’s faithful witness and in readiness to die. Thus an understanding of the christology of Revelation must take into account Jesus as a witness who dies as a result of the testimony that he gave.<sup>23</sup>

Yet this does not necessarily understand ὁ μάρτυς as equivalent to ‘martyr’. Bauckham writes: ‘The martyrs conquer not by their suffering and death as such, but by their faithful witness to the point of death’.<sup>24</sup> Jesus, like Israel in Is.43, is called to give testimony on God’s behalf.<sup>25</sup> However, there is something of the prophet understood in the title as well as the suffering servant.<sup>26</sup> The prophet came to be understood as a martyr figure by the first century CE; moreover, the prophet/servant/witness of Is.53 suffered as a consequence of his testimony.<sup>27</sup> Thus, the phrase would suggest a testimony Jesus has given to others, the verbal witness of

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<sup>23</sup> Trites, (1977) 154 ; ‘for Jesus had borne his testimony before Pilate’s tribunal, and the martyrs must face a Roman judge’; Sweet, (1981) 104 the testimony given is both the verbal witness to his father summed up at his trial, and his obedience on the cross; Lampe, (1981) 122 emphasizes the spoken testimony before the court. Death is almost incidental.

<sup>24</sup> Bauckham, (1993a) 237 cf. Lampe, (1981) 122.

<sup>25</sup> Reddish, (1982), unpub. dissertation, 128.

<sup>26</sup> Dehandschutter, (1980) 287.

<sup>27</sup> Comblin, (1965) 160 suggested that the originality of Revelation is to have introduced the idea of martyrdom, as in 4 Macc, into a theology of witness. Comblin does not make enough of the connection between witness and servant and thus does not recognize the importance, as testified in Jewish literature like 4 Macc, that Deutero-Isaiah synthesises the idea of death following from witness.

Jesus, summed up at his trial and his obedience to his Father, in his life-especially in Gethsemane and on the cross.<sup>28</sup> His witness before Pilate was a known tradition in the early church (1 Tim.6.13). Jesus' death resulting from his testimony, therefore, establishes a link between death and witness. Yet, the 'testimony' is still more related to the testimony and faithfulness of Jesus' life, and his death confirmed his testimony to God and his faithfulness. His refusal to play the power games of the condemner, is Jesus' testimony. His testimony is to accept the condemned condition. He embraces the label of deviant and in this way gains honour before his condemners in his rejection. Suffering and readiness to die are important components of the faithful witness. Jesus' silent and passive acceptance is his greatest testimony, his refusal to participate in their games of power. Therefore, it can be said that the martyr can in fact conquer by suffering and death. Yoder comments that:

'suffering is not a tool to make people come around, nor a good in itself. But the kind of faithfulness that is willing to accept defeat rather than complicity with evil is, by virtue of its conformity with what happens to God when he works among us, aligned with the ultimate triumph of the Lamb'.<sup>29</sup>

There is something of this in Jesus' sending out of his disciples as sheep among wolves (Matt.10.16). Neil and Travis observe that too often followers of Christ 'when faced by "wolves" adopt the tactics of the wolves - to play the power game, or to rely on the security of schemes and organisations. Too easily we forget that we are sent out as sheep by one who himself "was led like a sheep to the slaughter" (Is.53.7)'.<sup>30</sup> The

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<sup>28</sup> Ladd, (1978) 23; Sweet, (1981) 104; Bauckham, (1993b) 72.

<sup>29</sup> Yoder, (1994) 238.

<sup>30</sup> Neil & Travis, (1981) 74.

essential witness is not to be like the wolves but to persuade them by unconditional love. The ultimate expression of this witness is inevitably to die rather than apostatise. Therefore, martyr and witness are closely linked.

b.1.9 John reports to the churches that the reason for being on Patmos was connected with the ‘word of God’ and the ‘testimony of Jesus’. John had been exiled as the phrase διὰ τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ is repeated in 6.9 of those who had been martyred.<sup>31</sup> John is one who pursued a lifestyle, modelled on Jesus, that was in harmony with the suffering servant/witness of Isaiah and elsewhere.

c.2.13 Antipas is held up as an example of one who died because he would not deny πίστιν μου and held fast to the name of Jesus. The title of ‘faithful witness’ for Antipas is qualified with μου. Antipas is, therefore, presented as witness to Jesus rather than to God. Yet, it is to Jesus’ testimony to God that Antipas is faithful. Sweet suggests that the witness of Jesus inspires the faithful to bear witness.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, this is supported:

ἡ γὰρ μαρτυρία Ἰησοῦ ἐστὶν τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς προφητείας (19.10; cf.22.9)

Mounce writes: ‘the message attested by Jesus is the essence of prophetic proclamation’.<sup>33</sup> Jesus is associated with the tradition of prophets and servants of God, yet the most supreme. Trites writes of Antipas: ‘Just as it was the destiny of the OT prophets to experience persecution, suffering and death for the sake of their message,

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<sup>31</sup> This is discussed in more detail in chapter 5 .

<sup>32</sup> Sweet, (1981) 104; Comblin, (1965) 156.

<sup>33</sup> Mounce, (1977) 342. Also Bauckham, (1993a) 161: the witness Jesus bore is the content of Spirit-inspired prophecy.

so it is also the lot of the prophetic witnesses of Jesus'.<sup>34</sup> The proclaimer has become part of the message in the same way that those who die for a cause can become immortalized within the message, they become the message. Antipas is one who stays faithful to God's promises through standing firm to the message that Jesus testified, that is to keep God's commandments (12.17). Antipas is a prophet of the New Covenant with Jesus as the Lord. Although Antipas was not numbered among the distinct group of prophets (11.18; 16.6 and 18.24),<sup>35</sup> Sweet points out: 'potentially all the Lord's people were prophets - if they were true to their baptismal vocation - and all were called to the same witness as their Lord, and the same result'.<sup>36</sup>

d.6.9. The faithful were executed because they held the testimony and the word of God. It is not stated that the testimony they held was the testimony of Jesus, but this is assumed by ἡν ἐῖχον (cf. 12.17) in that the testimony which the faithful should hold to is that of Jesus. Indeed, the significance of ἔχω is clearer in 12.17 in which the testimony they have is that which Jesus gave.<sup>37</sup>

With the opening of the fifth seal John sees under the altar those slain for the word of God and the testimony they gave. John is referring to those faithful witnesses to God's word who have died as a result of their testimony. The identity of the souls is not made explicit. Beale suggests that the souls are those who have recently died for

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<sup>34</sup> Trites, (1977) 160.

<sup>35</sup> Dehandschutter, (1980) 287. Bauckham, (1993a) 161, comments that it was not only prophets who prophesied, but clearly in 11.10 'prophecy and witness seem to be equated'.

<sup>36</sup> Sweet, (1981) 105; also Bauckham, (1993a) 161.

<sup>37</sup> Trites, (1973) 75



their witness to Jesus.<sup>38</sup> However, it is more likely that John has in mind a broader category of innocent people who have been murdered for their testimony which might account for the omission of Jesus with τὴν μαρτυρίαν. John deliberately omits Jesus as the OT prophets had not the witness of Jesus. Caird comments that John meant also to include the martyrs of the OT, for the cry “How Long?” had echoed down centuries of oppression.<sup>39</sup> In Ps.79 God’s servants and holy ones are murdered, their bodies are treated badly (vv.2-3; cf. the death of the two witness) and they cry out: ‘How Long, O Lord?’ The Psalmist looks for vengeance (vv.10, 12).

*Temple Altar.* 6.9 alludes to the blood of the innocent crying for vengeance.<sup>40</sup> The connection with the altar emphasises the Jewish idea that justice will be given to the innocent, the place where God will meet his people. The witnesses here are understood to have been slain sacrificially (σφάζω).<sup>41</sup> Beale writes: ‘as with Christ, those following him will have their sacrificial suffering and apparent defeat turned into ultimate victory’.<sup>42</sup>

If the altar is the bronze altar of burnt-offering, atonement may be associated with

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<sup>38</sup> Beale, (1998) 388; Sweet, (1979) 142, those under the altar are those slaughtered by Nero.

<sup>39</sup> Caird, (1984) 84. See Pss.7.3; 13.1; 35.17; 74.9; 79.5; 80.4; 89.46; 90.13; 94.3; Is.6.11; Jer.47.6; Hab.1.2; Zech.1.12.

<sup>40</sup> Hengel, (1997) 267.

<sup>41</sup> However, Ford points out that this is not the dominant meaning. Yet σφάζω is used of the slaughter of the passover lamb (Ex.12.6; Ezra 6.20), of the sacrificial killing of a bull (Lev.1.5,11) and of sin offering (Lev.4.24) and of the ritual slaughter of Isaac (Gen. 22.10). Moreover, the word is used of the slaughter of Jesus as Lamb (Rev. 5.9); Bauckham, (1993a) 349 would urge caution in that in 6.4 the word would suggest general slaughter.

<sup>42</sup> Beale, (1998) 389.

those other than Jesus (Lev.4). This certainly can be seen in Jewish texts in the first century (i.e. 2 & 4 Macc). Hengel, however, writes that this is where Jewish martyrdom differs from Christian martyrdom: 'In early Christianity, the whole expiatory power is connected in the sacrificial death of Jesus'.<sup>43</sup> This has led to others suggesting the golden altar of incense in the *debir*.<sup>44</sup> This it is thought avoids the idea of another sacrifice insofar as atonement for people is not the function of the golden altar. Yet, there might be ideas of atonement associated with this altar (Ex.30.10; Lev.16.17-18).<sup>45</sup> It is more likely that the bronze altar is intended as the blood was poured at the base of it (Lev.4.7,25). Therefore, can the witnesses of Jesus also conquer because of their witness and death? In Revelation, Jesus' sacrifice is understood as definitive, thus making pointless a lesser sacrifice of atonement. In 12.11 it is the blood of Jesus and the testimony the witnesses give that lead to their victory. It is not their blood that conquers. There would, therefore, be a total contradiction in John's soteriology if he understood another atoning sacrifice in 6.9. It is not unusual to understand innocent death as sacrifice. Paul saw his coming death as an offering to be poured out (2 Tim.4.6; Rom.12.1; Phil. 2.17; cf. Heb.13.15-16). Yet,

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<sup>43</sup> Hengel, (1989) 267-268.

<sup>44</sup> See Ladd, (1972) 102-103; Mounce, (1977) 157 thinks it is the altar of burnt offering, but the question does not really matter, they are blended together. No reason is given. Bauckham, (1993a) 269 thinks it is the incense altar, the one altar in the heavenly sanctuary; Beale, (1999) 391 argues for the golden altar arguing that atonement was associated with this altar. However, in observing Lev.4.7 what he omits to point out is that the blood is placed on the horns of the Golden altar and not on the base of the altar.

<sup>45</sup> Lev.16.18 is usually associated with the bronze altar (cf. Lev.16.11-12); however, the altar in v.18 was taken by *b.Yoma* 58b as the golden altar and so atonement would be associated with this altar. See Barker, (1991) 41.

this does not suggest that atonement is in Paul's mind. Moreover, sacrifice can be metaphorical in the OT for thanksgiving, a broken spirit, or perhaps prayer (Ps.50.13-14; 51.16-17; Is.66.20). The altar therefore could simply emphasise the idea that martyrdom is a sacrifice of thanksgiving. However, is there more significance to be attached to the altar?

*Altar and the Aqedah.* Beale suggests that 'the imagery of the altar brings to mind the ideas of both sacrifice and prayers'.<sup>46</sup> Vermes has argued that in first century thought the blood of the binding of Isaac was understood as atoning for the Jewish nation.<sup>47</sup> There is no evidence to establish certainty as Vermes' case rests on later Rabbinic material. However, Rev. 6.9 may provide the evidence.

The idea of the blood of the innocent crying out from the ground for vengeance was common in some parts of Jewish tradition. Vermes points to the Rabbinic *haggadah* on Ps.102.21 which links the blood crying out with Isaac's Aqedah in the tannaitic midrash:

'Through the merits of Isaac, who offered himself upon the altar, the Holy One, blessed be He, shall raise the dead. For it is written (Ps.102.21): "From heaven the Lord looked upon the earth to hear the groaning of the captive, to deliver the children of death"',<sup>48</sup>

Although this is too late to be considered significant on its own, it explains the presence of the altar in Rev.6.9 in a way that brings to mind sacrifice and prayer observed by Beale. In 6.9, the groaning of the martyrs are heard and they will be raised

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<sup>46</sup> Beale, (1999) 392.

<sup>47</sup> This has been discussed in detail in chapter 4 section 2.

<sup>48</sup> Tannaitic Midrash is quoted by Vermes, (1961) 207 as PRK (i.e. Pesikta de Rab Kahana), Piska 32, f.200b. Text is very late, dated by Musaph-Andriessse, (1981) 57 between 500 and 640 CE.

as a consequence of the merits of Jesus' sacrifice.<sup>49</sup> The altar alludes to the temple sacrifices which in Rabbinic writings were intended as a memorial of Isaac's self-oblation.<sup>50</sup> In this text, the sacrifice of Jesus is remembered.

*e.11.1-2; 3-14* Generally this text supports a classic martyr narrative with many of the components seen in Dan.3, 6; LAB 6, 38:<sup>51</sup> i.e. the foundations of the church are attacked, symbolised as the temple and the holy city which is trampled upon.<sup>52</sup> However, the golden incense altar (11.1) symbolizes that in spite of the attack, the church will be kept safe in its hidden spiritual reality.<sup>53</sup> Yet, the church, symbolized in the two witnesses must stand firm before its oppressor as was seen in terms of the suffering servant of Is.53. In using the forensic language of 'witness', John presents the witnesses facing the hypothetical interrogation of the oppressor. Presumably they also expected to die and thus follow in Jesus' way. In death, resulting from their testimony, the figures are saved in the resurrection (see PRK, Piska 32, f.200b quoted in Vermes above) linking with the important theodicy question for a social/religious group to address in encouraging and motivating martyr mindedness. Berger points out that the significance of any religion depends upon the credibility of the banners it puts in the hands of its members as they stand before death. It has been seen that such are in John's tradition in which death will result either in life or in the continuance of the

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<sup>49</sup> Jesus' sacrifice, it will be argued in the next section, was better than Isaac's.

<sup>50</sup> Vermes, (1961) 209.

<sup>51</sup> See Murphy, (1993) 161 for the main components. This is discussed in more detail in chapter 3 section 1.

<sup>52</sup> Bauckham, (1993a) 272.

<sup>53</sup> Bauckham, (1993a) 272.

community or some form of life after death (see chapter 2, section 2).<sup>54</sup>

The role of the two witnesses is to prophesy (v.3). The reason for the ‘two’ may be accounted for by the remembrance of two recent historical figures.<sup>55</sup> However, it is more likely they represent the faithful witnessing church (11.4 cf. 1.20) and the ‘two’ emphasises the forensic background in which two witnesses are needed for a testimony to stand in court. The background remains rooted in Jewish tradition in which the church is in continuity with the ancient prophets of Israel. Ps.79.3b depicts God’s holy ones as those whose bodies are left unburied as here. However, although the two witnesses allude to Moses and Elijah, they are not any particular prophets of the ancient traditions for their death follows Jesus (11.8).<sup>56</sup> Jesus is the supreme model and those who witness should expect the same fate.

11.7 records the first of two occurrences (cf. 12.11) in which the testimony is not the testimony of Jesus, but is their own. Both examples emphasize the importance of their own actions and words. Jesus’ testimony is their own testimony that results in death. It is important, however, to observe that the death is not itself part of the witness, death follows from their testimony. Yet, they are exalted before their

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<sup>54</sup> Berger, (1990) 51.

<sup>55</sup> See discussion in Ford, (1975) 177-178 of the various suggested possibilities and thorough footnote no. 293 in Beale, (1999) 573. Various possibilities include: Paul and Peter; two Jewish high priests martyred in 68 CE (Josephus *War* 4.314-318); et al.

<sup>56</sup> Bauckham, (1993a) 85 notes the reason for using Moses and Elijah: ‘Both are prophets. As prophets who both confronted the world of pagan idolatry they set a precedent for the church’s prophetic witness to the world’.

oppressor (11.11) in a way similar to the way the suffering servant of Is.52.13-53.12 is exalted (Is.52.15) (see chapter 2 section 1 part e).<sup>57</sup>

f. 12.11 reports that the saints have conquered through the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony (see discussion on 6.9 for the conquering through the blood of the Lamb). There is a third aspect that may be connected with ‘conquering’:

καὶ οὐκ ἠγάπησαν τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτῶν ἄχρι θανάτου

The word of their testimony is their faithfulness in their lives in not compromising and not fighting their condemners on their own terms by engaging in power games. This is emphasized by καὶ linking the above phrase directly in relationship with ‘the word of their testimony’. καὶ can be taken as introducing a causal clause:

‘and they conquered...on account of the word of their testimony καὶ since they did not love their soul until death’<sup>58</sup>

The καὶ might also be introducing an explicative clause, but this would suggest the martyrdom is synonymous with the word of their testimony. The more probable sense is that in their response to the challenger, they fight not with the weapons of the challenger; rather they accept their fate at the hands of the challenger, but without compromising. Their testimony relied upon their readiness to die, hence the causal use of καὶ. They conquer because they compromised in no way, supremely expressed in readiness to die. Beale similarly writes that this second clause ‘is a negative way of saying that they persevered in their testimony to Christ, despite persecution’. Further

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<sup>57</sup> In chapter 3 section 1 part e in discussing Is.53, Nickelsburg, (1972) 24 pointed out that the servant of Is.53 is exalted before the kings and nations.

<sup>58</sup> For the causal use see Gen.24.56. See also Aune, (1997) xciv. Aune makes the point that the *causal* usage is not strictly Semitic as it is found in other Greek literature.

he writes: 'The mark of genuine "overcomers" is that they love their Lord more than their own earthly welfare'.<sup>59</sup> Their readiness to stand firm before their persecutors reminds God of the faithfulness of Jesus (see discussion on 6.9), which explains why their conquering is dependent on the blood of the Lamb.

g. 12.17 This verse depicts the ancient mythical struggle between good and evil. The oppressor or accuser is the ancient serpent who is enraged against God's chosen people (cf. 11.18). God's people are those who keep God's commandments and have the testimony of Jesus. Persecution and death are associated with the way they live; keeping God's commandments is to bear witness to Jesus.

h. 17.6 ὁ μάρτυς is applied to the faithful and is associated with death resulting from being a witness. Two groups may be alluded to. The τῶν μαρτύρων may be distinct from the τῶν ἁγίων. Does this emphasize the significance and particularity of the witnesses? The RSV translates τῶν μαρτύρων as 'martyrs' rather than 'witnesses'. Trites locates witness here in the third stage of semantic development in which death is regarded as part of the witness.<sup>60</sup> However, it is misleading to apply such categories, as Trites' 'third stage' can be identified in Deutero-Isaiah. 'Martyr' is an unnecessary translation as the 'holy ones' are murdered as well as the witnesses. Both are martyrs in the English sense of the word. Why then not categorize them as witnesses if ὁ μάρτυς has reached this meaning? Most scholars do not understand two distinctive groups here which needs exploring.

The 'holy ones' is a popular phrase for John (5.8; 8.3-4; 11.18; 13.7; 13.10; 14.12;

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<sup>59</sup> Beale, (1999) 665.

<sup>60</sup> Trites, (1973) 73 and 78-79.

16.6; 18.24; 19.8; 20.9). Such a prominence would suggest that John is aware of the Hebrew background, possibly the **חסיד** a word familiar in the Psalms although never translated ἅγιος by LXX.<sup>61</sup> Also Dan.7.18 should be acknowledged as underlying John's τῶν ἁγίων is Dan.7.18: **קדישי עליונין** (LXX: ἅγιοι ὑψίστου).

Observation of these phrases may elucidate the use in Rev.17.6.

Psalm 79 is a cry to God regarding the servants and saints who have been murdered by the Gentiles. V.2 places two groups in synonymous parallelism: the **עבד** and the **חסיד** (LXX 78.2: ὁσίων). Both are depicted as food for the birds of the air and beasts of the earth and their blood is poured out and they are left unburied. This resembles closely the presentation of God's faithful in Revelation. God's servants in Ps.79.2 could be the prophets/witnesses (see also Rev.11.18; 16.6; 18.24). John also closely connects the two groups: witness and saint to the extent that they are considered the same. This is possible to argue on the basis of καί as *explanatory* as Beale does.<sup>62</sup> In this way the blood of the saints is the blood of the witnesses of Jesus.

In addition, Ps.116.15 adds to the usage of **חסיד**:

(LXX 115: ὁσίων αὐτοῦ) **יקר בעיני יהוה המותה להסידיו**

Here the holy ones are associated with those who have been murdered; thus John would have appropriated such a title because of the associations with innocent death.

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<sup>61</sup> **חסיד** in the plural occurs thirty-two times in the OT, and of those it occurs twenty-five times in the Psalms. The LXX often translates **חסיד** as ὁσίος. It is unlikely, however, that John would use ὁσίος to express **חסיד** as ὁσίος is used elsewhere in Revelation for God (see Rev.15.4 and 16.5: only God is ὁσίος).

<sup>62</sup> Beale, (1999) 860.



Also the קְדִישֵׁי עֲלִיּוֹנִין in Dan7.25 are the ‘holy ones’ who will be conquered, but they will be redeemed (v.26).

i.20.4

Καὶ εἶδον θρόνους καὶ ἐκάθισαν ἐπ αὐτοὺς καὶ κρίμα ἐδόθη αὐτοῖς, καὶ (epexegetic)  
τὰς ψυχὰς τῶν πεπελεκισμένων διὰ τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ καὶ διὰ τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ

Ladd points out that two groups are present in the syntax. He points out that the verse is ungrammatical, and there is no obvious antecedent to ἐκάθισαν. The suggestion here is that John is using καὶ epexegetically as the Hebrew *waw* can be taken.<sup>63</sup> In acknowledging this it is possible to appreciate the delicacy of the subordinate clauses in 20.4. The following translation assuming the Hebrew background will facilitate exegesis:

*‘Then I saw thrones and seated upon them were the souls who had been beheaded on account of the testimony of Jesus and the word of God; they were so seated because justice had been given in favour of them’*

Bauckham observes the double-edge to witness in which the hope of the witness’ testimony is to persuade the audience of the truth. However, if the testimony is rejected, the testimony becomes evidence against those who reject it.<sup>64</sup> This would fit the above translation. However, there is a difficulty in understanding those on the throne having become judges. It is unlikely that judgement is given to the faithful as judgement has already been passed (19; 20.1-3); moreover, Jesus is the judge (19.11-

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<sup>63</sup> See Caird, (1980) 118 lists six uses of the *waw*; Waltke & O’Connor, (1990) 652-653. Sweet, (1979) 288 also takes καὶ as ‘that is’. See also full discussion of the use of καὶ Beale, (1999) 974-976.

<sup>64</sup> Bauckham, (1993b) 105.

17).<sup>65</sup> Another possibility will be suggested, one also argued by Krodel and Beale.<sup>66</sup>

Rev.20.4 draws upon Dan.7.9, 21-22, 26. In Dan.7, God's chosen, represented as a son of man, is defeated. However, a time is seen when judgement will be given in favour of the chosen [לְקַדְּשִׁי](v.22),<sup>67</sup> and the oppressor will be judged in the court by those seated upon thrones (v.9), and his dominion will be taken away (v.26). In Matt.19.28 the Greek is unambiguous and judgement is given to the twelve apostles but the Greek is not so in Rev.20.4 (cf. 1 Cor.4.8; 6.2; Eph.2.6). In 20.4 those who die for the witness that they give will be exalted and their testimony will be vindicated by God in the divine court in the judgement that will be given in their favour. The background also is found in Isaiah and especially in Deutero-Isaiah in which God's witness is the king and the chosen. Observation here will facilitate understanding of Dan.7 as well as Rev.20.4. God is primarily the judge (Is. 30.18). He will vindicate his people in the divine court. The elevation of the oppressed witnesses of God to the throne of judgement is to vindicate their witness against those who reject it. Therefore, it is better to read αὐτοῖς as a *dativis commodi*,<sup>68</sup> namely, that judgement was given in favour of them or on behalf of them. Moreover, it is likely that κρίμα (משפּט = justice) is used in an unfavourable sense in respect of the enemy.<sup>69</sup> For example, κρίμα appears in 17.1 in which it is used of the condemnation of the harlot. In 18.20 God

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<sup>65</sup> Note the unnecessary translation given by NRSV in which 'authority to judge' is supplied.

<sup>66</sup> Beale, (1999) 997; Krodel, (1989) 333; similarly Aune, (1998) 1085: 'It is possible that the major purpose of depicting the enthroned figures in Rev.20.4 is to emphasize their exaltation'.

<sup>67</sup> Goldingay, (1987) 146 writes that judgement is given on behalf of the saints.

<sup>68</sup> See Blass and Debrunner (8188); Aune, (1997) clxxvi notes the use of this dative in 13.14, also note 2.5, 16; Beale, (1999) 997 also reads the text in this way.

<sup>69</sup> According to Arndt and Gingrich, p.451, κρίμα usually appears in this way.

establishes justice in favour of the faithful against the false accuser.<sup>70</sup> The Greek associates the judgement with God's chosen: τό κρίμα ὑμῶν. This agrees with 20.4 in which κρίμα is given to the chosen. Yet this does not suggest that they are judges. Rather, κρίμα means 'sentence passed'.

#### 4. *Summary of Findings*

ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστός in 1.5 could be associated with a servant of God who might suffer and die as a result of delivering his testimony. The content of the testimony given is the evidence which Jesus gave in his life and death, particularly before his condemners. The title connects Jesus with the past figures who suffered and died for the testimony that they gave. Antipas follows the example of Jesus, one of faithfulness to the word of God. In a setting in which the challenge to God's people took the form of seduction *vis-à-vis* wealth and safety, rather than violent coercion, John reminded his readers that compromise was not the way of faithfulness and appropriated Antipas' act in order to remind them of a recent believer who would rather die than compromise. Readiness to die for a belief system is a powerful weapon in validating one's claims to truth and gaining honour. The crying out for vengeance from the altar may allude to the Aqedah tradition in that the sacrifice of his followers or any who are innocent will remind God of the innocence and sacrifice which Jesus made, thus leading to the redemption of those in bondage to the workings of the beast. In 6.9 those who have died like Jesus, die as a consequence of the testimony that they gave. The testimony is the testimony of Jesus which he gave before his accusers in his silence, readiness to die and his nonviolence. Gandhi writes of Jesus' atonement: 'Jesus atoned for the sins of

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<sup>70</sup> Sweet, (1979) 275. See also Caird, (1984) 229.

those who accepted his teachings by being an infallible example to them. But the example was worth nothing to those who never troubled to change their lives'.<sup>71</sup> 11.1-14 adds to the picture already observed in which Jesus is the unique example and model who inspires his chosen people to make his testimony their testimony and results in martyrdom. 17.6 maintains the link between faithful witness and a holy life with an innocent death. The connection with the holy ones appropriates a Jewish group from the Psalms and the holy ones of Dan.7, who were associated with innocent death. In 17.6 the holy ones are the witnesses of Jesus. The sense of 20.4 is that justice will be given in favour of his witnesses against the false witnesses. The fate of those who persecute and murder will be to experience persecution and be killed (18.20). However, it is a fate that they bring upon themselves by refusing the testimony of God's witnesses, their message of nonviolence. This rejection is particularly emphasized in the grisly outcome of God's witnesses, i.e. to be beheaded. They accept their lot and refuse to participate in the power games of their violent persecutor. The whole situation is presented using the law-court metaphor where the witnesses are depicted as seated on thrones of judgement, but this expresses their exalted state rather than their status as judges.

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<sup>71</sup> Quoted in Jesudasan, (1984) 74.

## *5. Conclusions*

1. Jesus is remembered as a faithful witness to the world in his teachings, actions and death.
2. In his life and death, Jesus sought the transformation of the world from the values of the beast in favour of God's. In particular, he achieved this by not participating in the power games of the beast and his followers. He sought to show them another way. This is expressed by John in describing Jesus as a witness. Witness would bring to mind ideas of being a suffering servant who chose the way of weakness to transform the antagonist.
3. His testimony expressed in his teachings, life and death would become a judgement upon those who refuse to listen to it.

Therefore, Jesus as a faithful witness compares well with Gandhi's ideology of testifying to the ways of truth, which it is clear in both traditions, are nonviolent. Change from the values of violence and oppression occurs when God's witnesses cease to fight such values in their own terms. A witness is some one who fights and desires victory, the antagonist must be confronted and his honour must be challenged and God's must be gained.

REVELATION 1.7: JESUS AS THE PIERCED SERVANT

1. *Exegesis*

Those who see *the pierced figure* are the ones who pierced him, yet it is every nation that laments on account of him. The verb ἐκκεντέω ‘to pierce’ appears in the NT only in John 19.37 as well as Rev.1.7. In both Jesus is compared to the figure in Zech.12.10.<sup>1</sup>

Zech.12.10 presents someone who suffered like the figure of Is.53, resulting in the sorrow of the violent ones. Caird comments on the context of Zech.12.10: ‘In the Zechariah passage the mourning is quite evidently said to be penitential grief, which is followed by divine pardon, cleansing, and restoration’.<sup>2</sup> Caird sees John as appropriating this context for the mourning in Rev.1.7: ‘This can only mean that they will have compunction for the wounds they have caused him’.<sup>3</sup> However, Ladd writes of John’s use of Zech.12.10: ‘Ordinarily this idiom should mean that the crucified one has become the object of their sorrow; i.e., they are grieving because they have crucified him. This would mean that men will be convicted for the evil of their terrible crime, and in repentance will seek God’s forgiveness. However, there is in the book of Revelation no indication of the repentance of the wicked’.<sup>4</sup> Sweet objects to this interpretation as it has no respect for the context of Zechariah, and also John shows

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<sup>1</sup> Caird, (1984) 18; Sweet, (1981) 111-112 & (1979) 112.; Bauckham, (1993a) 319-322; Aune, (1997) 56; Beale, (1999) 196-199.

<sup>2</sup> Caird, (1984) 18.

<sup>3</sup> Caird, (1984) 18; also Sweet, (1979) 62 and (1981) 101, 112; Beale, (1999) 197.

<sup>4</sup> Ladd, (1978) 28-29.

marked awareness of context, especially with of Daniel and Zechariah.<sup>5</sup> Also, contrary to Ladd, Revelation is concerned with repentance and not judgement (Rev.1.7; 5.13; 9.20-21; 10.11; 11.13-15; 14.6-7; 15.4; 16.9,11; 21.3, 5, 23-26; 22.2).<sup>6</sup>

John applies a suffering messianic interpretation to Zech.12.10 in which Jesus is the figure of Zech.12.10. Those who mistreat the servant would come to see their deeds as evil (cf. Is.53.11). Zech.12.10 may have been influenced by Is.52.13-53.12. It is possible that John made the intertextual connection between Zech.12.10 and Is.53. The suffering servant is for John not only the figure of Is.53 but also the one pierced by the nations. John depicts Jesus as an exalted martyr figure who willingly goes to his death, and those who pierced him will come to acknowledge the truth of Jesus' testimony; not simply because of his spoken testimony, but because he was willing to die for what he testified insofar as he refused to compromise and dishonour God before his accusers. It may be argued that they lament because they see Jesus as exalted (i.e. coming on clouds) rather than being repentant for what they have done, but then there would be no real repentance but rather expedient sorrow to placate the mighty, exalted victor. It is rather the testimony of his life and death that brings about repentance and not his exaltation. Those who pierced him will mourn for the one they have pierced. Here, the impact of the martyrdom is seen. Their mourning is in Zech.12.10 (not in Rev.1.7) a result of the pouring out of the spirit of compassion (ἰπ)

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<sup>5</sup> Sweet, (1979) 63; Beale, (1999) 197. It can be argued that allusions to the OT by John is contradictory to their OT context. However, where this occurs, Beale has shown there is a precise pattern to this usage, what he calls 'an inverted or ironic use' (1999) 94.

<sup>6</sup> Caird, (1984) 18; also Sweet, (1979) 62 and (1981) 101, 112; Beale, (1999) 197; Harrington, (1993) 231-232 lists the key texts which show Revelation's concern for repentance.

and supplication (תחנונים). תחנונים can suggest the mercy of the victor for the vanquished (Josh.11.20). It is interesting to note the conclusions of some sociologists who concluded from their observations that the martyr can shame the oppressor.<sup>7</sup> In social anthropology 'shame' is not unrelated to תחנונים. Malina notes the idea of deference attached to shame. Those who have pierced the figure show shame at what they have done. In so doing the action of martyrdom is seen as beneficial to the oppressor. In 12.10 instead of the figures becoming shameless, i.e. showing no recognition of their fellow humanity, they show respect and make living together possible. John is influenced by the wider context of Zech.12-14 which is concerned with the establishment of God's universal kingdom in which many from the nations will confess Yahweh: this is the concern of the witness (esp.14.2, 8, 11). Sweet has observed that in Revelation the victory of witness brings about conversion and healing, as opposed to the hardening effect of the retributive plagues. This reading is supported by appeal to its structure and use of scripture, particularly Zech.12-14 (cf. Is. 53.11).<sup>8</sup>

Although John has not altered the context (so Sweet above) of Zech.12.10, it is obvious that John has broadened the group who repent. It is not just the lost house of Israel, but all tribes and nations repent. Bauckham discusses the intertextuality here in terms of the influence of the promise to Abraham in Genesis 12.3, 22.28, 26.4 and 28.14. He also notes Psalm(LXX) 71.17b adds 'tribes' and 'nations' to MT in the light of Gen.22.28 and 26.4, thus identifying the king in the Psalm with the offspring of Abraham to whom the promises of blessing referred.<sup>9</sup> The early Jewish and Christian

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<sup>7</sup> Weiners, (1990) 22.

<sup>8</sup> Sweet, (1981) 101.

<sup>9</sup> Bauckham, (1993a) 321.



exegetical interest in Gen.22 has been important to this thesis and it seems quite plausible that John has alluded to it in 1.7, although the wider conceptual framework for broadening the groups who can be saved would be seen also in Deutero-Isaiah. Yet, it is likely that there is a textual and conceptual relationship between the promises made to Abraham and the theology of Deutero-Isaiah.

The influence of Dan.7.13 on Rev.1.7 is seen in the 'coming with clouds'. It is clearly an allusion to the arrival of the son of man. The clouds function to emphasize the exalted status of Jesus. 'Cloud' in Hebrew thought is associated with divine presence (Ex.13.21; 16.10; cf. Matt.17.5; Acts.1.9).<sup>10</sup>

## 2. Conclusion

Jesus is a suffering witness/servant who has been martyred. His death leads to sorrow among those who martyred him. Willingness to die would have associations with the Lamb of Is.53.7 and Isaac in Gen.22, both connected with martyrdom. In the use of this description for Jesus, John is emphasising Jesus as a suffering figure, one who does not play the power games of the beast's followers. This coheres with the depiction of Jesus as a faithful witness who testifies to the antagonists in weakness and not violent power. Such a portrayal relates closely to Gandhi's vision of the effectiveness of *satyagraha*. Parekh writes: 'The *satyagrahi*'s love and moral nobility disarmed his opponent, weakened his feelings of anger and hatred, and mobilized his higher nature'.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Mounce, (1977) 72

<sup>11</sup> Parekh, (1997) 56.

REVELATION 1.13-16: JESUS AS A HUMANLIKE FIGURE

It has been observed that one like a son of man in Dan.7.13 represents the *maskilim* of Dan.11.35, and both could be associated with the suffering servant/witness of Is.53. The presentation of Jesus in Revelation as a son of man, or more precisely as a *humanlike figure*, will be assessed as to what extent this connects with witness and martyrdom and thereby associates Jesus with the suffering witness/servant of God and the pierced one.

1. *Exegesis*

a. ὅμοιον υἱὸν ἀνθρώπου. Rev.1.13 renders MT Dan.7.13 literally, unlike the other allusions in the NT.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, John is not presenting Jesus as the Son of Man, but like Dan.7.13 as a *humanlike figure*. The phrase ὅμοιον υἱὸν ἀνθρώπου is not a Christological title.<sup>2</sup> The figure in Daniel 7 is presented before God and receives dominion, glory and kingdom (v.14). Only in Dan.7.13-14 does this phrase occur; therefore, it is a precise reference to the figure in Dan.7.13.<sup>3</sup> The interpretation of the vision suggests that a *humanlike figure* and those identified with the figure are

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<sup>1</sup> Trites, (1977) 161. This is another example of John relying on the Hebrew-Aramaic rather than the LXX. If the LXX had been John's source he would have had ὡς rather than ὅμοιον.

<sup>2</sup> Swete, (1922) 15; Lindars, (1983) 159; Harrington, (1993) 51 and Bauckham, (1993a) 295 and (1994) 97-98; Charles, (1920) 27 the figure is like an angel; Beale, (1999) 209 sees the figure as a priest on the basis of the lampstands as they are temple items.

<sup>3</sup> Bauckham, (1993a) 97 and (1994) 295-296; *pace* Casey, (1979) 148-149 believes it is an allusion to Dan.10.16, 18.

afflicted (Dan.7.21); for John, the association with Is.52.13-53.12 would be clear.<sup>4</sup> Beale also suggests that the phrase relates to suffering, thus picking up on the context in Dan.7. He makes the further point that the connectedness with the Lamb makes this even more likely;<sup>5</sup> also to be added is Jesus as ‘a pierced one’ and ‘the faithful witness’. However, scholars believe that central to the figure is judgement,<sup>6</sup> yet judgement is not given to a *humanlike figure* in Dan.7.<sup>7</sup> The key text for those who understand judgement to have been given is 7.22:

וְדִינָא יִהְיֶה לְקַדְיָשִׁי עַל־יוֹנִין (Dan.7.22)

This need not be translated as ‘to the saints’, but rather, ‘in favour of or on behalf of the saints’.<sup>8</sup> Dan.7.22 indicates that in spite of obvious appearances, namely, that God’s people will be defeated by the beast, yet justice will be given in favour of them.

It is important to observe that John has placed the figure among the lampstands, which symbolise the seven churches (Rev.1.20). Their mission together is to be witnesses to the nations. Sweet observes that ‘lamps’ suggests their role of ‘witness’, which is developed from the imagery of Zech.4 at Rev.11.3ff.<sup>9</sup> This is well illustrated

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<sup>4</sup> Goldingay, (1987) 170-171.

<sup>5</sup> Beale, (1999) 356.

<sup>6</sup> See especially Comblin, (1965) 55 in which he writes that the mission of the Son of man is to execute the judgement of God.

<sup>7</sup> Bauckham, (1993a) 97 points this out. Rowland sees a judge figure here, but he cannot cite evidence other than 19.11 which is not the Son of Man. Bauckham, (1993a) 295 suggests persuasively that John uses the exact phrase of Dan.7.13-14 because that figure is not a judge. The Son of Man in the Similitudes would be a judge.

<sup>8</sup> Goldingay, (1987) 146; see also discussion above regarding Rev.20.4.

<sup>9</sup> Sweet, (1979) 71, observes that *λυχνίας* suggests the seven-branched candelabrum of the Jewish sanctuary (Ex.25.31, Zech.4.2, 10).

when the figure occurs in 14.14-16 in which Christ's kingdom is extended from the church to the nations.<sup>10</sup> In Revelation there will be repentance, but there will be many who reject the testimony of God's chosen (cf. God's rejected witnesses in Dan.11.35). It is given to the son of man that all nations, peoples, and languages shall serve and obey him (Dan.7.14) and the beast's dominion will be consumed and destroyed (Dan.7.26). Such language is not present in Rev.1.13-16. However, Jesus has made every tribe, tongue and people and nation a kingdom and priests to God (Rev.5.9-10). Also in connection with the lamps is the association with the priest who stands in the midst of lamps, which alludes to the temple where the priest would be found.<sup>11</sup>

In sum, the precise depiction of Jesus as the son of man figure of Dan.7.13 may allude to the *maskilim* in 11.35 and 12.3. The figure is a witness of God in order to win nations from the beast's dominion and thus receive them into the universal kingdom which the son of man has received from God, in which all will obey God's laws (cf. Rev.5.10).<sup>12</sup>

b. ἐνδεδυμένον ποδήρη καὶ περιεζωσμένον πρὸς μαστοῖς ζώνην χρυσᾶν

Beale suggests that the garments of the high priest are in the mind of John.<sup>13</sup> The following are the holy garments of the high priest (Ex.28.4 cf. Lev.16.4 and

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<sup>10</sup> Bauckham, (1993b) 98.

<sup>11</sup> Beale, (1999) 209. See also discussion of imagery and Son of Man in Barker, (1991) 168-170. I do not see problems with the priest connection, similarly with the figure of Is.53. The figure could be suffering king, prophet and atoning priest.

<sup>12</sup> Bauckham, (1993b) 97.

<sup>13</sup> Beale, (1999) 209; *pace* Morris, (1979) 53: 'though priests did wear the girdle higher than others, in their case it was a woven sash and not a golden clasp, which was rather the mark of royalty'.

Wis.18.24):

חשן ואפוד ומעיל וכתנת תשבץ מצנפת ואבנט

If John presents Jesus as the high priest, it is not clear why, of the six important items of clothing, John only includes perhaps two:<sup>14</sup> מעיל = ποδήρη. It is possible that אבנט = ζώνην χρυσᾶν. Like John, Daniel sees a man dressed in linen and a golden girdle around his loins (MT: מתן LXX: ὀσφυν (10.5), as does Ezekiel (Ezek.9.2 MT: מתן LXX: ὀσφύος).<sup>15</sup> John has in mind מתן which indicates the middle of the body, probably the waist (Is.11.5; Ezek.1.27; 8.2; 47.4). Ezek.9.2(MT) is unclear exactly what is placed around the figure's waist. The Hebrew קסת appears only here and its meaning is unclear. BDB connects it with קשה. Neither makes sense in the present text. LXX reads:

καὶ ζώνη σαπφείρου ἐπὶ τῆς ὀσφύος αὐτοῦ

This compares well with Rev.1.13 except Revelation translates מתן as μαστοῖς in contrast to Dan.10.5 (LXX) and Ezek.9.2 (LXX). The original meaning underlying קסת is not clear but John has opted similarly to LXX. Yet John draws upon Dan.10.5 for the detail that the girdle is golden. Also, the detail regarding the long robe (ποδήρη) is not present in Dan.10.5 (either LXX, Theodotion or MT).<sup>16</sup> It is also

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<sup>14</sup> But this should not necessarily argue against the priest. Intertextuality need not be exact, the association with the lampstands and the clothes would push the evidence towards the priest allusion.

<sup>15</sup> The LXX differs from MT in which the figure has precious stone around his waist. John, on the whole, prefers the Hebrew, here he might be influenced by LXX. This is not unlikely as Trudinger, (1986) 78-79; Beale, (1985) 618-620; Sweet (1979) 40.

<sup>16</sup> LXX Dan.10.5: ἐνδεδυμένος βαδδιν; MT: לבוש כדים.

important to observe Ezek.9.2:

Ezek (MT) 9.2: לְבַשׁ בְּרִימִים (cf. Dan.10.5)      Ezek.(LXX) 9.2: ἐνδεδυσκὼς ποδήρη

This might suggest again that John has drawn upon Ezek.(LXX)9.2 for the long robe that the son of man wears although John could have translated Dan.10.5 in the same way as LXX translated Ezek.(MT)10.5.

In sum, while it is not possible to conclude that John was influenced by Dan.10.5, it is possible that Ezek.9.2 underlines John's usage, yet he probably drew upon both.<sup>17</sup> It is important to see why John draws upon these two traditions.

*Ezek.9.2 and Dan.10.5.* The figure in Ezek.9.2, who stands beside the bronze altar, puts the divine mark on the righteous so that they would not be punished (9.4-5). Brownlee observed that 'the whole action may be compared with the events of the Passover in Egypt. As in that experience (Ex.12.7, 13, 22-23, 27) some are to be protected by a mark of preservation (Ezek.9.4, 6). Just as the Lord "passed through" Egypt (Ex.12.23), so do Yahweh's emissaries in Ezek.9.4-5 pass through Jerusalem'.<sup>18</sup> This resonates with Revelation in which the mark serves the same function for the servants/witnesses of God (7.2-3; 14.1; cf. Ezek.9.4-5 and Ex.12.7). The mark in Ex.12.7 was the blood of the lamb over the door. Jesus is introduced as a Lamb in Rev.5.6, one who has lived a life of obedience until death, and provided them with an example which becomes their mark and which results in their victory. The 'mark' in Revelation is a metaphor for belonging to God; to belong to God is to keep his commandments, give his testimony and do good works and in so doing gain honour

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<sup>17</sup> Beale, (1999) 210.

<sup>18</sup> Brownlee, (1986) 144.

for God before his opponents. It is suggested that John so read Ezek 9.4-5 alongside Ex.12.7. Jesus is compared to the figure of Ezek.9.4-5 through whose actions people are saved. Moreover, the faithfulness of God's servants reminds God of Jesus' faithfulness, which is the mark of Jesus, indeed, it is the name of Jesus (Rev.14.1). Their faithfulness will be their protection.<sup>19</sup>

In sum, the two items of clothing are related to Ezek.9.2 (LXX) and Dan.10.5. The mission of the one like a human figure is to save the righteous. The 'mark' Jesus places upon them is similar to that of the blood of the Lamb which could be related to the Aqedah. The mark on the faithful is the name of Jesus, a mark that separates them from the beast. However, the 'mark' represents the way they live, and their works will remind God on the day of judgement that they carry the mark of Jesus manifested in their righteous lives. As to the priestly connection, possible as it may be, the clothing does not necessarily suggest a high priest or priest. Yet in view of Revelation's temple imagery and the hope that all will be priests, John may have in mind a priestly figure and that the figures in Dan.10 and Ezek.9 were seen as priestly figures.

c. *Jesus as exalted figure* (1.14-16). John presents Jesus as an exalted figure echoing the man in linen in Dan.10, in order to express the importance and validity of the revelation that he has received. In Dan.10 the importance of the message is emphasised by the use of an exalted figure who delivers the message of warning and hope (cf. Dan.10-12).

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<sup>19</sup> It is interesting to compare this idea with Rev.11.1-2 in which the holy of holies will not be trampled on symbolizing the spiritual protection that the faithful will experience.

ὡς ἐν καμίνῳ πεπυρωμένης

Sweet suggests that this detail may link in with the furnace in Dan.3.6 in which the three faithful servants would rather die than worship Nebuchadnezzar.<sup>20</sup> Sweet's suggestion links with John's presentation of Jesus as one who has conquered through suffering and connects with the Hebrew idea that suffering will strengthen the sufferer (especially Ps.66.10-12). Moreover, a fear for John is that members of the church will worship the image of the beast (13.5). This detail reminds his audience that John would rather die than disobey God, similarly to the three figures in Dan.3.

A further addition:

ἡ δὲ κεφαλὴ αὐτοῦ καὶ αἱ τρίχες λευκαὶ ὡς ἔριον λευκὸν ὡς χιτῶν

God, the Ancient of Days (Dan.7.9) has hair like pure wool and his clothes were white as snow. 1 Enoch describes the hair of the Son of man in the same way:

'His head was white like wool' (46.1)

This clearly belongs within the Dan.7.9 tradition, but here the Son of man is identified as a judge figure. It seems unlikely that John is presenting Jesus as a judge figure here as he is only seen as a judge in Rev.19.11. It is interesting to observe 1 Enoch 106.10:

'the hair of his head is whiter than white wool (cf. Joseph and Aseneth 22.7)

Chapter 106 associates such a description as being unlike a human being (106.10). However, the figure is a human being, Noah, born of woman, a righteous person, upon whom rests the hope of God's people (106.16-18). He will be a remnant of the righteous, i.e. those who belong to him, who will be saved from the sin and oppression (106.18). The figure is not a judge but a righteous person amidst sin and oppression. However, a greater time of oppression is predicted (106.19). John, influenced by this tradition, presents Jesus remaining faithful to his church. They are a righteous remnant

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<sup>20</sup> Sweet, (1979) 72; Beale, (1999) 210.



amidst sin and oppression who do not belong to the order of the beast.

The description of hair may draw upon 1 Enoch 106.10, but Aune simply concludes that the ‘metaphor conveyed such notions as respect, honor, wisdom and high social status’.<sup>21</sup> Such notions are seen in the figure of Noah (note also Jacob in Joseph and Aseneth 22.7).

καὶ ἔχων ἐν τῇ δεξιᾷ χειρὶ αὐτοῦ ἀστερας ἑπτὰ

This description has been associated to the Graeco-Roman world. Janzen’s suggests that imperial Rome especially seen in her coinage provides the key to its understanding.<sup>22</sup> However, the number seven has important symbolic value in Jewish tradition and it symbolizes completeness. In addressing seven churches, John indicates that his message is addressed to specific churches as representative of all churches.<sup>23</sup> V.20 describes the stars as the angels of the seven churches. The angels are the spiritual counterparts of earth realities. The significance of the imagery here is that John depicts Jesus’ relationship with the whole church which as one of protection and encouragement.

ἐκ τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ ῥομφαία ὀξεῖα ἐκπορευομένη (cf. 2.12, 16)

Mounce draws upon Is.49.2 for his understanding when he writes that it ‘symbolizes the irresistible power of divine judgement’.<sup>24</sup> However, the sword in Is.49.2 is associated with a witness figure. The word of God’s witness would function to win

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<sup>21</sup> Aune, (1997) 94.

<sup>22</sup> Janzen, (1994) 651.

<sup>23</sup> Bauckham, (1993b) 16. The seven stars here must be seen in the wider context of the book rather than particularizing and applying numismatics upon the text as Janzen does.

<sup>24</sup> Mounce, (1977) 80. Discussion of the significance of the ‘sword’ will be discussed in more detail when examining the rider on the horse in Rev.19.11-16 (chapter 11 section 3).

people from lies and illusion to the truth. The setting here is the court and not the battle fields. The witness is to be a light to the nations that God's salvation would reach to the ends of the earth (Is.49.6; cf. Acts.1.8). This has been argued by Caird: 'the "mouth like a sharp sword" is the symbol of the prophet, whose utterance has a cutting edge to it, because he speaks the word of God'.<sup>25</sup> The sword is like the witness which Jesus gave to win nations to God from the beast.<sup>26</sup> However, in 19.15 the sword is said to slay them. Yet it is the rejection of the witness that leads to their destruction (cf. John 12.48; cf. 1 Enoch 10.9; 4 Ezra 13). To this extent it is the testimony that destroys the enemy. Revelation highlights this by using the sword as the testimony. However, the testimony is love and forgiveness. Gandhi similarly used sword:

'The sword of *satyagraha* is love, and the unshakeable firmness that comes from it' (11-59)

## 2. Conclusion

Jesus is a suffering figure who gives his witness faithfully. He will be vindicated in that justice will be given in favour of him. The clothing points to him as one who stands in the midst of suffering as God's faithful witness. The association of mouth and sword emphasises Jesus as a witness, as well as the nonviolent theme in which the sword is his witness to God's love. His verbal testimony and actions reveal his unconditional love that leads the antagonist either to transformation or to death. There is nothing in 1.13-16 that contradicts the previous presentations of Jesus as faithful witness and the pierced one.

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<sup>25</sup> Caird, (1984) 245.

<sup>26</sup> Bauckham, (1993b) 105; cf. Harrington, (1995) 66; *pace* Ford, (1975) 314; Yarbro Collins, (1979) 135; Ford, (1975) 314.

## Chapter 10

### JESUS AS A LAMB

Engnell comments that the purpose of using imagery is not aesthetic but practical inasmuch as the intention is to argue and persuade. This is done making use of stereotyped phrases and figures which often approaches a kind of literary cliché. In this way, the speaker demonstrates his knowledge and ‘wisdom’, the most important proof of his familiarity with the tradition.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, Bauckham writes: ‘They [images] do not create a purely self-contained aesthetic world with no reference outside itself, but intend to relate to the world in which the readers live in order to reform and redirect the readers’ response to that world’.<sup>2</sup> Beale sees the symbolic language functioning ‘to encourage and exhort the audience’;<sup>3</sup> more precisely *vis-à-vis* Revelation ‘to motivate the readers not to compromise with the world but to align their thoughts and behaviour with the God-centred standards of the new creation’.<sup>4</sup> These observations will provide guidelines for this section.

#### 1. Review

The Lamb has been linked to the passover Lamb, the Lamb of Is.53, and the Lamb warrior leader of the Animal Apocalypse.<sup>5</sup> Views which oppose a sacrificial understanding point out: a. If a sacrifice was intended, sin would be that which the

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<sup>1</sup> Engnell, (1970) 244.

<sup>2</sup> Bauckham, (1993b) 20.

<sup>3</sup> Beale, (1999) 69.

<sup>4</sup> Beale, (1999) 69.

<sup>5</sup> Sacrificial image: for example, Ladd, (1978) 85-86, Sweet, (1979) 124, Bauckham, (1993b) 71; military image: Charles, (1920), vol.1, p.141; Ford, (1975) 86.

Lamb removes.<sup>6</sup> b. Σφάζω is more in line with being killed in battle, and θύω would be more appropriate.<sup>7</sup> c. Martyrdom provides the background to the Lamb image.<sup>8</sup> d) Lamb is a militant conquering figure.<sup>9</sup>

a. *Sin*. Ford acknowledges that Jesus is said to have removed sin (1.5). However, Ford considers it is significant that sin is not present in 5.9. Ford's understanding of sin betrays an Augustinian understanding.<sup>10</sup> Revelation's understanding is rooted in the OT in which sin is servitude from which humanity cannot be freed except by a miraculous intervention of God.<sup>11</sup> For John, sin is bondage to the beast and those who follow it. One in sin is one who lives not according to the principles of nonviolence, love and compassion - the aspects of God's nature and creation.

b. *Murdered or Sacrificed?* σφάζω can mean both 'to murder' and 'to sacrifice', but, on the whole, sacrificial slaying is common (Gen.22.10; Ex.12.6; Ezek.6.20; Lev.1.5, 11; 4.24; 9.8; Num.19.3). Moreover, θύω need not indicate a sacrificial death (John.10.10; Acts 10.13; 11.7). Also, it is difficult to understand Rev.7.14 other than

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<sup>6</sup> Ford, (1975) 91.

<sup>7</sup> Ford, (1975) 90; Laws, (1988) 52-68.

<sup>8</sup> Ford, (1975) 90-91.

<sup>9</sup> Dodd, (1963) 232; Beasley-Murray, (1983) 125.

<sup>10</sup> That is, moral or sexual

<sup>11</sup> Lyonnet & Sabourin (1970) 9. See Gal.3.13 & 4.5 in which Jesus' death has resulted in being redeemed (ἀγοράζω) from the curse of the law. In fact ἁμαρτία is rare in Galatians (only three times), but this does not prevent scholars supposing a sacrificial understanding of death. 1 Cor.6.20 and 7.23 present a similar understanding to Revelation in which Jesus has bought humanity from slavery.

as sacrifice.

c. *Martyrdom and Sacrifice*. Aune writes: 'There is a connection between the use of sacrificial metaphor and the notion that martyrdom could be viewed as a means of purification for the sins of the people (2 Macc.7.38; 4 Macc.6.29)'.<sup>12</sup> Also, the placing of the martyrs under the altar of burnt offering (6.9) suggests a connection between sacrifice and martyrdom.

d. *Lamb as a military leader*. It is difficult to find evidence of a Lamb as a military leader.<sup>13</sup> In 1 Enoch 89.16, 18 it is suggested that Moses and Aaron are lambs. The Aramaic has ܠܡܕ (lamb), but the Ethiopic has sheep (*bag*). Hillyer points to the Greek version of 1 Enoch 89.45 which has ἀρνὴν.<sup>14</sup> However, why does John have ἀρνίον? The most important text that scholars depend on is 1 Enoch 90.37-38.<sup>15</sup> But this depends upon an emendation to the text which is disputed.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, the animal does not have horns. Dodd points to 90.6-16 in which lambs are portrayed as having horns (v.9). Nevertheless, it is not the lambs who have the horns, it is from one of the sheep that the great horn sprouts. The great leaders are not lambs but rams or sheep.

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<sup>12</sup> Aune, (1997) 373.

<sup>13</sup> Bauckham, (1993a) 183. 'There is no substantial evidence that the Lamb was already established as a symbol of the messianic conqueror in pre-Christian Judaism'; Aune, (1997) 368. T.Jos.19.8 is the only evidence comparing the Messiah to a lamb which may well be a popular Jewish view, see O'Neill, (1979) 2-30.

<sup>14</sup> Hillyer, (1967) 229.

<sup>15</sup> Dodd, (1953) 232; Lohmeyer, (1927) 51-52 does not even acknowledge the textual problem.

<sup>16</sup> Knibb, (1978) 216; full discussion see Lindars, (1976).

There is T.Jos.19.8 which is considered to be a later Christian interpolation.<sup>17</sup> However, there are strong arguments for a Jewish author made by O'Neill.<sup>18</sup> He with Koch points also to the Lamb in Pharaoh's dream who outweighed all of Egypt (see Pseudo-Jonathan Targum Ex.1.15).<sup>19</sup> However, even if, as O'Neill claims: 'Jews before Jesus Christ looked for a Messiah who would be called the Lamb of God',<sup>20</sup> it does not argue that Revelation is presenting Jesus in such a light. In fact, it is probable that the tradition is Jewish rather than Christian, as there is little to support that Jesus or anyone else thought Jesus a military messiah. Jesus is a slain Lamb. So, if there is a tradition in Jewish thought of a Lamb as a military leader, this does not suggest a Lamb is used to present Jesus as a military leader. Rather, Jesus may be the antithesis of the Jewish military leader.<sup>21</sup> However, more plausible is Beale's observations which suggest that an aspect of retributive irony may be at work, even among the Jewish thinkers who were anti-military. T.Jos.19.8 may fit the same tradition as 4 Ezra 13. The presentation of a lamb trampling his enemies under his feet is ironic. Beale writes of John's use of irony: 'ironic use is to mock the enemy's proud attempt to overcome

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<sup>17</sup> Note also T.Ben.3.8 in which the Lamb of God appears but who will be betrayed. This is probably a Christian interpolation based on John 1.29, 36, see Aune, (1997) 369. O'Neill, (1979) 7 thinks it is unlikely that this is a Christian interpolation on the grounds that a Christian would not refer to Joseph as a Messiah.

<sup>18</sup> O'Neill, (1979) 2-30.

<sup>19</sup> Koch, (1966) 79-93; O'Neill, (1979) 9. Aune, (1990) 370ff dates this tradition to the eleventh century and is influenced by the tradition that Moses was the servant of God thus making the connection between **טל** meaning both 'lamb' and 'servant'.

<sup>20</sup> O'Neill, (1979) 27.

<sup>21</sup> Sweet, (1979) 124 thinks there was an expectation of lamb military figure, but John takes the other view.

God and his people and to underscore the fitting justice of the punishment'.<sup>22</sup>

It has been argued that Lamb should be translated 'ram' on the grounds that the animal has seven horns.<sup>23</sup> Horn denotes physical might and power. In Ps.75.4-5 (H5-6) those who defy God do so by lifting their horns. In v.10 (H11) God exalts the horns of the righteous (cf. Ps.92.10 (H11)). The exalting of the Davidic king is associated with a sprouting horn (Ps.132.17; cf. 89.17 [H18]). In 2 Sam.22.3 God is termed 'the horn of my salvation'. It is therefore not surprising that Jesus the Lamb is presented with seven horns, as one whom God has given victory; horns indicates the power of salvation.<sup>24</sup> There is no need to associate the Lamb with a conquering ram on these grounds. Moreover, even if ram is accepted, the presentation of the ram as slain hardly supports a conquering reading of the text. Still the juxtaposition of the Lamb with the Lion of the tribe of Judah would seem to argue for a ram image. However, this is not the case. This will be looked at in the detailed discussion of Rev.5.

*Summary.* There is little to distract from a sacrificial association with the Lamb image. Moreover, Lamb is not an obvious or understandable symbol for a military leader. There is little precedent for such an understanding, and it does not fit the context in

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<sup>22</sup> Beale, (1999) 95.

<sup>23</sup> Beale, (1999) 351, while accepting the importance of the sacrificial background, and otherwise he would not suggest ram as an adequate translation, tentatively suggests that 1 Enoch 90 and T.Jos.19 provide the background to the 'horns'.

<sup>24</sup> It may be argued that a lamb with seven horns is not a coherent picture and only a ram has horns. How many rams have seven horns?! The significance of the seven must be seen in the OT in which it is the number of fullness or totality; see Bauckham, (1993a) 16, 26-27, 40, 67, 109; *pace* Yarbrow Collins, (1984a) 1276-1279 who argues that seven suggests order rather than totality; so also Corsini, (1983) 42-44.

which John has used the Lamb. However, John may well have been appropriating military expectations in showing Jesus as conquering, but not with military weapons. To this extent Aune's proposal that underlying the Lamb are both military and sacrificial metaphors is acceptable.<sup>25</sup>

## 2. *Exegesis of 5.6-9*

Lamb, it will be suggested, is understandable in the light of martyrdom and witness ideas and of the hypothesis that John had in mind *haggadic* traditions relating to Isaac when using Lamb imagery, especially, in regards Rev.5.6-9;<sup>26</sup> In addition, and related to this, is the question of the author's motive for appropriating this tradition, *viz.*, it is proposed that the author felt the need to respond to a debate between church and synagogue, thus satisfying how imagery functioned in the OT as Engnell has commented, namely rhetorically in order to persuade his audience.

a. *Themes in the text.* The Greek for Lamb in Revelation is ἀρνίον. It is observed that the more common expression of Lamb is ἀμνός. Both Greek words are related and both are associated with similar Hebrew words for lamb. Hillyer is not convincing when he suggests that John uses ἀρνίον to emphasise that Jesus is being presented not just as a sacrificial lamb; if so, he would have used ἀμνός.<sup>27</sup> John has used the Lamb as an image to emphasise the sacrificial nature of Jesus' death. There is no evidence

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<sup>25</sup> Aune, (1997) 368.

<sup>26</sup> This has been argued by Bredin in (1996b) 26-43 with some changes!

<sup>27</sup> Hillyer, (1967) 229; if John does intend a distinction, Beale, (1999) 354 is more plausible. He suggests that 'if the diminutive nuance still held, it intensified the contrast between the powerful lion image of the OT prophecy and the fulfilment through the little, apparently powerless lamb'.



that ἄρνιον is other than a sacrificial term, especially when the term is used for a sacrificial victim (Jer.11.19).

The Lamb is Jesus the ‘faithful witness’, ‘the pierced one’ and ‘a son of man’. Lamb appears in the OT as the Passover Lamb whose blood has an apotropaic effect (Ex.12.13). Lamb is used metaphorically to describe the faithful, suffering servants of God (Is.53.7). There is also the burnt-offering Lamb which is Isaac (Gen.22). It has been seen above that all three traditions were probably linked. Many scholars are convinced that the passover Lamb or the Lamb of Is.53 or both underlie Rev.5 although it has been only tentatively suggested that Gen.22 *haggadah* is of any importance.<sup>28</sup>

The Lamb conquered and redeemed, by its blood, many from all tribes, tongues, people and nations and made them a kingdom and priests, and they will rule the earth (vv. 9-10 cf. 12.11). Another occurrence of the redemptive role that Jesus plays is seen in another hymn to Jesus, 1.5:

τῷ ἀγαπῶντι ἡμᾶς καὶ λύσαντι ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἐν τῷ αἵματι αὐτοῦ ὁ καὶ ἐποίησεν ἡμᾶς βασιλείαν, ἱερεῖς τῷ θεῷ καὶ πατρὶ αὐτοῦ

The similarities *mutatis mutandis* with 5.9-10 are clear:

καὶ ἡγόρασας τῷ θεῷ ἐν τῷ αἵματί σου ἐκ πάσης φυλῆς καὶ λαοῦ καὶ ἔθνους καὶ ἐποίησας αὐτοὺς τῷ θεῷ ἡμῶν βασιλείαν καὶ ἱερεῖς

The syntax and changes can be accounted for by change of setting. Only here in the NT is λύω used of release from sin. John uses λύω in its more usual sense and, therefore, knows its literal meaning (5.2; 20.3, 7). How can the usage be accounted for

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<sup>28</sup> Farrer, (1964) 94; Spiegel, (1967) 85; Dahl, (1974) 138 mentions Rev.5 as ‘reminiscent of the Akedah’ but never makes the allusion explicit; Ford, (1975) 91, misses the connection between sacrifice and martyrdom; Daly, (1977) 73.

in 1.5b? A marginal reading of Neofiti 1 on Gen.22 may provide a clue:<sup>29</sup>

‘Now I pray for mercy before You, O Lord God, that when the children of Isaac come to a time of distress, You may remember on their behalf the binding of Isaac their father, and loose (ושרי) and forgive (ושבק) them their sins (לחוביהון) and deliver them from all distress’ (Frag. Tg. 22.14)<sup>30</sup>

The Aramaic word שרי is used nowhere in the Aramaic texts in the OT for the forgiving of sins (see BDB.8281). This *haggadah* makes a connection in which Isaac’s action is the important aspect thus making a link between Rev.1.5 and the Targum possible.<sup>31</sup> John is concerned with the distress that his community will experience if they are faithful to the testimony of Jesus and this targumic tradition would recommend itself to John, but with the emphasis being on Jesus.

As has been seen, Isaac is a Lamb as sacrificed, similarly Jesus is a Lamb who has been sacrificed. Also both are associated with having released people from sin. Moreover, Isaac was understood as a proto-martyr, similarly so John presents Jesus. John is concerned that Jesus be seen as one who was faithful and obedient to God’s command until death, so also was Isaac. Given the prominence of such traditions in the time of John, it is quite possible that John has linked three traditions together: Isaac, Passover Lamb and Isaianic suffering servant. All have three things in common: 1) Deutero-Isaiah draws heavily upon Exodus traditions in which a new Exodus is presented in similar language to Exodus;<sup>32</sup> 2) Deutero-Isaiah’s universalism is reflected

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<sup>29</sup> I am indebted to Carnegie, (1982) 250 who originally suggested that Tg on Gen.22 underlies this.

<sup>30</sup> Translation from Vermes, (1961) 195.

<sup>31</sup> Carnegie, (1982) 247, 249. This particular Targum is very old.

<sup>32</sup> Comblin, (1965) 29: ‘Le retour d’Israël eest annoncé comme un nouvel Exode plus brillant que le premier’. Comblin was in no doubt that a strong link existed between the passover lamb and the

in Gen.22.18; 3) all contain a slain Lamb. Revelation has much in common with all three. In Gen.22.7-8 **לֶשֶׁח** is that which Isaac expected his father to offer up. In 22.10 **לֶשֶׁח** describes Abraham's action *vis-à-vis* Isaac. In Ex.12 Lamb is again **לֶשֶׁח**. Moreover, the verb 'to slaughter' is **שָׁחַט**. In Is.53.7 the Isaianic servant is compared to **לֶשֶׁח**. The word for slaughter is not **שָׁחַט** but **טָבַח**. But the similarities provide excellent material for the use of the *gezērâ šāwâ*.

How does this understanding function *vis-à-vis* the juxtaposition with the image of the 'Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David' (5.5)? Here is a militant Messianic title.<sup>33</sup> Caird suggests that Lamb interprets lion: 'Wherever the Old Testament speaks of the victory of the Messiah or the overthrow of the enemies of God, we are to remember that the gospel recognizes no other way of achieving these ends than the way of the Cross'.<sup>34</sup> Bauckham observes John's tendency to juxtapose contrasting images in order to address a precise situation of debate. He argues that John, in using lion and root of David, did so because they embodied the idea of victory through destructive power.<sup>35</sup> Bauckham writes that in using Lamb 'John forges a symbol of conquest by sacrificial death'.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, in chapter 7 is the juxtaposition of the

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lamb of Is.53.7. This well have been an original intention, but there is no way of being certain.

<sup>33</sup> Caird, (1984) 74. See Gen.49.9; Is.11.1-10; Sir.47.22; Rev.22.16. The Lion image is reflected in Gen.49.9 which as Bauckham, (1993a) 180-181 has observed was important for Jewish messianic hopes at the time of John. In 1QSb 5.29 the Messiah is addressed: you shall be as a lion; and you shall not lie down until you have devoured the prey which nought shall deliver'. The image is drawn from Num.23.24; Mic.5.8 as well as Gen.49.9.

<sup>34</sup> Caird, (1984) 75; also Sweet, (1979) 125-127; 150-151; Beale, (1999) 353.

<sup>35</sup> Bauckham, (1993a) 182.

<sup>36</sup> Bauckham, (1993a) 183.

remnant 144000, particularly resonant in Zionistic ideas that only a few from the Jews will be saved, with a huge number from every tribe, nation, people and tongue (7.9). Such a debate as to whether those from the house of Israel will be saved or from among the Gentiles was a common debate in the first century. John may even be responding to those in his own community as well as those in the synagogue.<sup>37</sup>

b. *An Example of the Use of the Aqedah for Anti-Synagogue Purposes in Asia-Minor.*

As has been seen, the situation in Asia Minor was one of hostility between synagogue and church, yet also debate within each community regarding how to relate to Rome and its *pax Romana*.<sup>38</sup> By the time of the mid-late second century, the situation can be seen to have deteriorated. It is in this climate that Melito's works were composed, one of which is directed against the synagogue. In his *Paschal Homily* synagogue members are blamed for the suffering and death of Jesus, similarly they are accused of stubbornness and inability to understand the figure that they had put to death in Jerusalem. Central to this work is the desire to show the superiority of the church in interpretation of tradition over that of the synagogue, that is to prove that Christianity has superseded Judaism. Wilken proposes that Melito appropriates the Aqedah

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<sup>37</sup> Bauckham, (1993a) 180 sees this contrast in Rev.7.4-8 see also Rev.21.9-10; Sweet, (1979) 147 when he observes that John is here responding to slanders that all can be saved and not only the house of Israel; cf. Bredin, (1996b) 95-111 argues in detail that such a debate underlies Matthew's development and incorporation of language. Such a juxtapositioning is seen in terms of the women in the genealogy, and the response of Jesus to his disciples in contrasting their views regarding the Canaanite women ((Matt.15.21-28).

<sup>38</sup> Kraybill, (1996) 168.

tradition in order to respond to criticisms made by synagogue members.<sup>39</sup> Wilken's argument is that the binding of Isaac, for the synagogue, was considered a symbol both of God's faithfulness to his people and his continuing love for them.<sup>40</sup> However, Melito contends that the binding of Isaac had no such meaning and could not be used to comfort and support the Jews.<sup>41</sup> In *frag.9* Melito retorts:

ἀλλὰ Χριστὸς ἔπαθεν, Ἰσαὰκ δὲ οὐκ ἔπαθεν

Wilken suggests that Melito wishes to emphasise that Isaac did not die but that Jesus did. If the Aqedah was understood in Judaism as a sacrificial offering which became the basis for God's mercy to Israel, that the offering was not completed caused certain difficulties.<sup>42</sup> This seems a logical argument to make from observation of Gen.22, and one that Melito and, it is argued here, John made use of in spite of Hayward's argument that Melito is not stating that Jesus' blood was shed. Melito states that Jesus suffered (ἔπαθεν).<sup>43</sup> However, as Lieu notes, πάσχειν refers to Jesus' death.<sup>44</sup> Melito continues his argument in *frag.10* staying closer to the sense of Gen.22, and shows that the ram was sacrificed, and it was the ram that redeemed Isaac. Wilken

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<sup>39</sup> Wilken, (1984) 53-69; Lieu, (1996) 226; *pace* Hayward, (1990) 303-306.

<sup>40</sup> Wilken, (1984) 53-69; Lieu, (1996) 225. It is curious that Kraabel (1971) 84, fails to mention the fragments in his discussion of the hostile attitude of Melito towards the Jews.

<sup>41</sup> Wilken, (1976) 64-69.

<sup>42</sup> Wilken, (1976) 65; Hayward is not convinced, (1990) 304: 'Melito does not remark that Christ's blood was shed whereas Isaac's was not'. The Greek, πάσχω, does not suggest death but it does indicate suffering until death.

<sup>43</sup> Hayward, (1990) 304.

<sup>44</sup> Lieu, (1996) 226; used of dying in Herodian 1, 17, 7; sim. Siog. L.5, 61. see Arndt & Gingrich, p.639.

comments that Isaac seems to become a type of the redeemed.<sup>45</sup> In *frag.11*, Jesus is called the Lamb like the ram (ἀμνὸς ὡς [ὁ] κριὸς), so Jesus the Lamb in *frag.11* is compared to the ram in *frag.10* who redeems humanity by his sacrifice: ‘Christ not Isaac’ was his battle cry!

c. *Conclusion*. The likelihood of an Aqedah influence on the composition of Rev.5.6-9 seems strong - yet not as a typology; rather, it is here proposed that John is using 5.6-9 to formulate an *antithetical* contrast between Jesus (the true proto-martyr, represented in the Lamb imagery who was sacrificed and whose martyrdom has atonement value) and Isaac (who did not die). As Wood points out: ‘The death of Jesus is the death of the greater Isaac, God’s own Son, who truly died and rose again to act as Intercessor before God’.<sup>46</sup> The Lamb functions, then, as an image which elevates Jesus above Isaac. It is Jesus who is portrayed as the exemplary martyr, the true and faithful witness to God, the one whom the church must look to and emulate if they, too, are to be conquerors like him..

The life situation in which John writes and the importance and priority biblical traditions play against the life setting are important in this argument. This coheres well with the points Engnell has been seen to make. Moreover, significant to the argument is that John is motivated in using his imagery by the need to argue for Jesus and to persuade his community that they must continue to be faithful to Jesus and not be persuaded by the synagogue or any other representative of Satan.

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<sup>45</sup> Wilken (1976) 66.

<sup>46</sup> Wood, (1967-1968) 587-588.

### 3. Other Occurrences of Lamb in Revelation

Hillyer has noted six themes around which the Lamb is presented but there is no evidence that the Lamb is a judge, moreover, Hillyer fails to see the dominant theme of witness/martyr associated with the Lamb.<sup>47</sup> The following themes are suggested to facilitate understanding the Lamb in Revelation:

a. Lamb is a redeemer; b. Lamb is a martyr figure; c. Lamb is a conquering leader; d. wrath of the Lamb; e. Lamb in relation to his church; f. Lamb as a pastor.<sup>48</sup>

Bauckham sees the work of Christ around three motifs: messianic war; new Exodus; and witness/martyr. Bauckham does not understand the third category to be important for the work of the Lamb. He is right in that the Lamb is not named a 'witness', there is no mention of a 'testimony of the Lamb'. Yet, witness is connected with Jesus' death; his testimony leads to his crucifixion. Further, it is the death that leads to victory. John is concerned to present Jesus as an example of faithful witness against hostility until death; it would seem odd to use an image that does not develop such concerns.

a. *Lamb as Redeemer*. The multitude from every nation acknowledges that salvation belongs to God and to the Lamb (7.10). This multitude has been said to have been saved by washing their clothes in the blood of the Lamb (7.14; cf. 12.11). Along with

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<sup>47</sup> Hillyer, (1967) 232-236. It is peculiar that he does omit this theme inasmuch as he accepts the importance of Is.53 for the writer of Revelation. The servant compared to a lamb is a suffering witness. On the whole, I do not suggest that John had in mind such categories. They are simply useful in pursuing this study.

<sup>48</sup> The 5th and 6th categories must surely be related as the Lamb's relationship with the church was that of a pastor.

chapter 5 these are the other occurrences of victory being linked with sacrifice, thus cohering with the Lamb in chapter 5.

b. *Lamb as Conquering leader.* Jesus is a military hero (14.1). His followers are chaste. Chilton understands the ‘chastity’ as a symbolic reference to the requirement of sexual abstinence by soldier-priests during holy war (cf. Ex.19.15; Lev.15.16; Deut.20.7; 23.10-11; 1 Sam.21.4-5; 2 Sam.11.8-11 cf. Deut.23.9-14; 1QM 7).<sup>49</sup> However, none of these texts suggest that the soldiers are priests. What is in mind is the chastity of soldiers. The enemies of God will be tortured before the Lamb (14.10). In 17.14 war is made on the Lamb but he conquers because he is Lord of lords and King of kings How does this cohere with a sacrificial/martyr reading of chapter 5, and the pierced one?

It is difficult to read the Lamb in chapter 5 as a military leader, rather a martyr/witness figure is in mind. This is the key to chapter 14. Bauckham points out that following the Lamb wherever he goes implies faithfulness as far as death, since the Lamb was led to the slaughter (Is.53.7; Rev.5.6).<sup>50</sup> John in chapter 14 is not contradicting himself, he is simply appropriating a metaphor system from his tradition, in this case warfare, except that his soldiers do not hold swords; rather they engage in nonviolent resistance against Satan and his representative, their ultimate sword is their witness to truth until death.<sup>51</sup> Every occurrence of the sword of the saints refers to the witness of the potential martyr or to God’s word, not a literal sword (1.16; 2.12; 2.16;

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<sup>49</sup> Chilton, (1990) 356; see also Bauckham, (1993a) 229-232.

<sup>50</sup> Bauckham, (1993a) 231.

<sup>51</sup> Compare Ephesians’ use of the warfare metaphor in 6.10-17.



19.15; 19.21). The other occurrence of the literal sword warns against its use (13.10).<sup>52</sup> The idea of martyrs being an army is not a surprising depiction. Gandhi talked about his followers being pure and disciplined. There was nothing passive about nonviolence and he wrote about ‘soldiers of peace’ (1-366). Moreover, the 144000 surely includes not only men, but also women and children.<sup>53</sup> As Gandhi pointed out the only real weapon for the masses, including women and children, was nonviolence (11-41). Similarly, in chapter 14 Jesus’ followers are truthful and, as in the case of Gandhi’s followers, victory would be gained by their witness to truth (14.5). Moreover, chastity is not necessarily applied literally, but metaphorically for purity. Harrington believes the description of the army as chaste is as a contrast to the armies of the Beast: ‘The 144000 are contrasted with the followers of the beast because they have refused to worship the beast and have remained faithful to the Lamb. In not giving themselves to the cult of the beast they have kept their virginity’.<sup>54</sup> It also important to note that Philo uses ‘virgin’ metaphorically for detachment from earthly concerns (*On the Cherubim* 49f).<sup>55</sup> The mention of gender in v.4 might suggest that only men form the 144000, but as Sweet writes: ‘The maleness is simply part of the military metaphor; they represent the whole church’.<sup>56</sup> Schüssler Fiorenza misses this point, but helpfully points out that as Revelation has no misogynistic tendencies, it is unlikely that this is the case here.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> In 6.4 the sword results in devastation; cf. 6.8.

<sup>53</sup> So Harrington, (1995) 62: ‘the 144000 represent all the redeemed, women and men’.

<sup>54</sup> Harrington, (1993) 147.

<sup>55</sup> Sweet, (1979) 223; Schüssler Fiorenza, (1991) 88; Beale, (1999) 741.

<sup>56</sup> Sweet, (1979) 222.

<sup>57</sup> Schüssler Fiorenza, (1991) 88.

The lamb in chapter 17.14 is (understanding this verse will also be elucidated in the discussion of the rider on the horse in chapter 11):

κύριος κυρίων ἐστὶν καὶ βασιλεὺς βασιλέων (cf. rev.1.5 and 19.16)

Beale suggests the background to the title is Dan.2.37, 47; 3.2; 4.37 (LXX 34).<sup>58</sup> Nebuchadnezzar is called 'king of kings' (2.37). Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges that only God is king (2.47; cf. 4.37). The association of 'king' with Nebuchadnezzar is emphasised as a gift from God, but it will be taken from him. In Dan.4 Nebuchadnezzar becomes a tree trunk depicting the king as powerless. Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar that to be a king he must practise righteousness and show mercy to the oppressed (4.27). It is likely that John has recycled this title alluding to Nebuchadnezzar and its context. This recycling is directed by a well defined, specific ideology of establishing Jesus' honour based on the values of justice and obedience to Yahweh. Therefore, the important aspect of this title in reference to Jesus is that one who pursued a life of nonviolent resistance and obedience to God against the world's standards of injustice is victor over the powers of violence and oppression, he is the true king because he is the antithesis of oppressing leaders who are not kings because they are oppressors. This may be another example of the juxtaposing of two apparently antithetical types, i.e. Lamb with King of Kings, in order to redefine the latter in terms of John's particular ideology.

Therefore, conquering violence is not present in chapter 14 or 17. In fact, the depiction is of a nonviolent army whose resistance to Rome is its refusal to participate with its power games. Their weapon is truth which is nonviolence and the only way to God and the establishment of the kingdom of God. Jesudasan's work on Gandhi's

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<sup>58</sup> Beale, (1985) 618-619.

christology observes Gandhi's identification of the importance of nonviolence in Jesus in that Jesus' teaching about non-violence is not simply ethics: 'Jesus was more than merely an ethical teacher. The way of Jesus' values was his way to the Father, the way to establish the kingdom of God'.<sup>59</sup> The way was to witness to truth which was non-violence. As Hanson writes: 'The victory of Christ and the saints is the victory of the cross, which is won not by killing others but by undergoing voluntary death'.<sup>60</sup> Lamb as a metaphor redefines violent imagery in terms of non-violence, self-suffering through which victory is gained.

c. *The Wrath of the Lamb* (6.16-17) .

*Understandings of Wrath*

The 'wrath of the Lamb' in Revelation and 'wrath' in the OT and within Pauline studies has often been discussed either as 'affective' i.e. the personal attitude of God and the Lamb towards sinners, or 'effective' i.e. impersonal and in no way an activity of God, but the calculable effect of certain behaviour.<sup>61</sup> In this discussion, it is accepted that 'wrath' is a holy war term associated with the eradication of evil and the establishment of justice. Wrath is presented as belonging to God and certainly

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<sup>59</sup> Jesudasan, (1984) 130.

<sup>60</sup> Hanson, (1957) 166; Klassen, (1966) 306: 'victory comes not by engaging in armed battle but by refusing to love one's life so much that one resists martyrdom and through consistent patterning of one's life upon the Lamb's sacrifice' cf. Harrington, (1995) 59: 'they have won by suffering death, not by inflicting hurt'.

<sup>61</sup> 'Affective': Chilton, (1990) 198; Yarbrow Collins, (1979) 48-49 argues that it is the response to the cries of the martyrs for vengeance. 'Effective': Dodd (1954) 23-24; Hanson, (1957) 170; Hillyer, (1967) p.234; Mounce, (1977) 162; Caird, (1984) 91; Sweet (1979) 144; Harrington, (1993) 96.

describes something of God's essence. Yet language describing God will often fall short of expressing an author's full feelings and understandings. It is suggested here that 'wrath' is better understood within the *effective category* when viewed against the wider context of Revelation.

### *The Ones who Want to be Hidden from the Wrath of the Lamb*

Yarbro Collins describes the scene in Rev.6 as one of devastation to those who were wealthy and powerful.<sup>62</sup> Contrary to Yarbro Collins, the number of categories of people in the vision would suggest that it is not just the wealthy and powerful who are in mind, numbered with the wealthy and powerful are also slaves (6.15; cf. 19.18). Harrington writes: 'All classes of society will be terror-stricken by the cosmic portents'.<sup>63</sup>

### *Destruction of the First Four Seals.*

The depiction of chaos resulting from the opening of the seals is the result of a world not at one with its creator's intentions (cf. Is.2.20-21). No one benefits from the violence and disaster that results from a society based on the principle of 'violence' (cf. 1 Enoch 10.9; 4 Ezra 13.9, cf. 31; 13.10, cf. 38). The first four seal openings derive from the OT and not any particular social event or events (cf. Is.2.19; 13.10; 34.2-4; 24.19-31; 50.3; Jer.4.24; Ezek.38.19; Joel 2.31; cf. T.Mos.10.4-5). Caird observes that all four riders represent evils which are not directly caused by the will of

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<sup>62</sup> Yarbro Collins, (1979) 49.

<sup>63</sup> Harrington, (1993) 96; Beale, (1999) 400.

God.<sup>64</sup> Morris writes of the four seals: ‘They show us the self-defeating character of sin’.<sup>65</sup> This is not the depiction of a malevolent God or Lamb who seeks to destroy a particular group, it is the result of human history (cf. 4 Ezra 13.38). Still, John hopes that all will be saved (15.5-19.21). The idea of the rebellion of humankind resulting in the acknowledgement of God is seen in Ps. 76.10:

כִּי חַמַּת אָדָם תּוֹדֶךָ

Eaton suggests from this verse that the rebellion of humankind ‘in the end only provides the occasion for a greater unfolding of God’s majesty’.<sup>66</sup>

However, this understanding of the results of the opening of the first four seals is not without its problems. Each of the riders is summoned by one of the four living creatures (6.1-7). The first, second and fourth rider are given the power of destruction from one of the four living creatures. Similarly, in 7.1-2 the four angels are said to have the power of destruction over earth and sea. Rowland writes: ‘Revelation seems to portray death and destruction as in some sense coming from God’.<sup>67</sup> Humanity rejects God’s will, punishment follows. Hanson suggests that Rev.6 describes various judgements which are a result of rejecting God including the sufferings of the faithful in the churches.<sup>68</sup> More precisely, Jesus has been rejected and disaster ensues because

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<sup>64</sup> Rissi, (1964) 413-418; Morris, (1979) 102; Caird, (1984) 81; Sweet, (1979) 137; Wink, (1992) 298; Harrington, (1993) 91; Beale, (1999) 377; *pace* Ladd, (1978) 98 sees the white horse as Christ; Chilton, (1990) 186 points out that the white horse is Christ. Beale, (1999) 376 finds it odd that Christ might open a seal that contains a vision in which he is also the subject.

<sup>65</sup> Morris, (1979) 102.

<sup>66</sup> Eaton, (1967) 193.

<sup>67</sup> Rowland, (1993) 83.

<sup>68</sup> Hanson, (1957) 170 cf. Caird, (1984) 91; Sweet, (1979) 144.

they have not listened to his testimony. Paul writes of God giving the wicked up to their lusts and impurity (Rom.1.24, 28). Rev.6.1-7 presents God acting against wicked humanity similarly to Paul's depiction of God: humanity is given up to its own wickedness. Rowland writes: 'In Rev.6.4 the second horseman removes peace from the earth, so that people slay one another: here is the consequences of the strife, envy and covetousness that Paul has spoken in Rom.1.28'.<sup>69</sup> The theology of Revelation must acknowledge that God is in control of the destruction that occurs. Yet in the mind of the author is the understanding that what occurs is what humankind brings upon itself through its violence and rejection of God's will. Its rebellion against God brings the disaster, that which God allows, thus bringing about a repentant heart (Ps.76.10).

#### *The Fifth Seal: Prayer of Vengeance*

In 6.10 the martyrs pray for vengeance on those who murder. Throughout Revelation is the hope that, resulting from human estrangement from God, people will repent through the tragedies of history (Rev.9.20-21; 11).<sup>70</sup> Sweet writes that 'the answer to the prayer comes not in the punishment of individual enemies but in the "judgement of the great harlot" who deceives the nations (17.1-19.2), and the coming of a new order, symbolized by the Bride'.<sup>71</sup> Ultimately, it is the great harlot who is the source of violence and oppression.

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<sup>69</sup> Rowland, (1993) 87.

<sup>70</sup> Klassen, (1966) 304; Bauckham, (1993b) 86ff.

<sup>71</sup> Sweet, (1979) 141, see introduction.

*The Sixth Seal: Hide us from the Wrath of the Lamb.*

The earthquake in Rev.6, as Bauckham points out, when examined in the light of its OT background, ‘heralds the coming of God in judgement’(see Is.13.13; 24.18-20; 34.4; Jer.51.29; Ezek.38.20; Nah.1.5).<sup>72</sup> It is not a picture of destruction as Bauckham writes: ‘the earthquake accompanies the theophany of God the Judge’.<sup>73</sup> This understanding is supported in the fact that the classes of people are not afraid of the impact a earthquake might have on them, i.e. the devastation of the earth. Rather, they are afraid of that which the earthquake heralds: an appearance of God and the day of judgement. As Sweet comments, the earthquake is ‘a recurring symbol of the dissolution of the godless world at God’s self-manifestation’.<sup>74</sup> It is the wrath of the Lamb that is feared.

Juxtaposing ‘Lamb’ with ‘wrath’ may, at first sight, appear incomprehensible as is the link between Lion and Lamb as representing one being (5.6). John reinterprets ‘wrath’ by juxtaposing it with the most nonviolent and non-militaristic image, Lamb. Wrath no longer depicts a military, conquering God on the battle field, God is no longer perceived as one who judges by slaying with a sword. Suffering love is associated with wrath, and therefore suffering love is that which brings about God’s judgement and kingdom.<sup>75</sup> Consequently, it is the cross that becomes the judgement on the world. Proceeding from the cross is a new revolutionary paradigm in which power and strength are shown as inadequate. However, it is not just the ‘mighty’ in Rev.6.15

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<sup>72</sup> Bauckham, (1993a) 202; Sweet, (1979) 145.

<sup>73</sup> Bauckham, (1993a) 208.

<sup>74</sup> Sweet, (1979) 145.

<sup>75</sup> Sweet, (1979) 146 observes well that the wrath of the Lamb is not the cosmic disasters.

who are seen as defeated, but 'servants' too. The desire to be hidden, therefore, from 'the wrath of the Lamb', for John, expresses a person's reluctance to hear the message of the cross which confronts, challenges and judges all that a person's life has been based upon (cf. Prov.28.1) - such a life is defeated and to say 'yes' to the cross is to embrace an uncompromising position in antithesis to the world, ultimately resulting in suffering and martyrdom. It is this challenge of the cross that the powerful and powerless (6.15) have to face or not, 'yes' or 'no' to the values of the world. Therefore, the theophany which is heralded by the earthquake, creates terrible fear among humankind. Their lives of violence and oppression are judged and repentance is needed. In this way, as Bauckham writes: 'the vision of the sixth seal may then be intended already to point as far as the Last Judgement'.<sup>76</sup> Therefore, the sequence in 19.11-20.15 should be seen as expanding the vision seen in 6.12-17.

Rev.19.17-21 picks up on those who have not repented. The groups in 19.18 resemble the groups in 6.15, those who have chosen their fate and refused truth. The grisly language of 19.17-21 belongs within the Hebrew tradition (cf. Ezek.39.17-24; see also Matt. 24.28; Luke 17.37) regarding the outcome of those who live such lives. The final outcome is grim as the remaining wicked ones have hardened their hearts and committed even more violent acts, John expresses how he sees their end from within his language and culture. Perhaps John is influenced by Ps.79.2 (cf. Is.49.26) in which the Psalmist laments that the servants of Yahweh have become food for the birds and beasts and are left unburied as the heathen defile the temple. For John, the fate of those who reject God will also become food for the birds (19.17-18).

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<sup>76</sup> Bauckham, (1993a) 209.



### *Summary*

‘Wrath of Lamb’ is another example of John reinterpreting his tradition in the light of the life and witness of Jesus. Jesus is not presented here as a vindictive, vengeful figure. Rather, he is one who suffered the violence of the world and was rejected because he represented truth. John presents humanity in the light of its rejection of Jesus in mythological, holy war imagery, i.e. the crisis and chaos that beleaguer individuals, societies and the world when truth, justice and non-violence are rejected. In facing the crisis the point of decision is reached, either to face the message of truth or to engage in the crisis and chaos of violence and thus perish (1 Enoch 10.9; 4 Ezra 13).

d. *Lamb in relation to his Church.* John has described Babylon the Harlot (17-18) as violent and oppressive and presented her as an obstacle to God’s will. The bride (19.7) who is arrayed for the wedding is said to be the new Jerusalem (21.10). The Bride is the church seen from the perspective of the *parousia*.<sup>77</sup> The new Jerusalem is the hope of the churches’ witness, of a time of peace when violence will be no more. The New Jerusalem is established on the basis of their righteous deeds, which involved holding to the testimony (19.10)<sup>78</sup> thus the significance of their clothing (19.8). However, this may also be an allusion to the clothing of the priests as presumably the city is a kingdom made up of priests (1.9; 5.10). As to the significance of the wedding imagery, it can be viewed against the background of the wedding between God and his chosen (Hosea 2; Is.61.10-62.5) or of the Davidic king (Ps.45). However, in this case it is the

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<sup>77</sup> Bauckham, (1993a) 167; Miller, (1998) 301.

<sup>78</sup> Beale, (1999) 934.

marriage of Jesus, the Davidic king, with the New Israel. Jesus as the Lamb emphasizes the sacrifice he makes for others (cf. Eph.5.25b). As a husband he is the leader, one who has provided an example of God's servant showing his bride the way to be holy (cf. Eph.5.27). In addition, the marriage imagery affirms that the Lamb and the new Jerusalem are one (cf. Eph.5.29). This coheres with the Lamb in that he is the temple and light of the new city (21.22-23). The idea of feast (Rev.19.9) harmonizes with the idea of banquet as an image of the Kingdom of God (cf. Matt.22.1-14 and parallels).

In sum, the Lamb is presented, when all things have been brought to completion, as one with the Kingdom of peace - the new Jerusalem, thus the significance of the wedding imagery, the kingdom is the righteous works of his followers. The feast represents the glorious time and place that will result from people living in peace. It will be a time when there is great wealth for all, in contrast to the disappearing wealth of Babylon (Rev.18).

e. *Lamb as Pastor* (Discussion of the aspect of shepherding with a rod will be looked at in chapter 11). Jesus is here presented as the shepherd of the new chosen people. Fekkes argues for only the influence of Is.25.8 and 49.10 on 7.17.<sup>79</sup> However, the idea of shepherding is too common a tradition to suggest that one particular text or texts are in mind (see also Ps.23 and Ezek.34.23). It seems, for example, inconceivable that Ezek.34.23 is not also in John's mind.<sup>80</sup>

‘And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them and be

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<sup>79</sup> Fekkes, (19994) 171.

<sup>80</sup> Beale, (1999) 442 observes this.

their shepherd'

Jesus is Yahweh's shepherd, an attribute of the expected Davidic king. However, 'shepherd' is not only used of a king or Yahweh. Zechariah records the idea of a prophet being a shepherd of Yahweh:

'Thus said the LORD my God: "Become shepherd of the flock doomed to slaughter"'  
(Zech.11.4)

John may have compared the oppressions that people suffered in Zech.11.5 with the sufferings of the churches and the hope contained in Zech.11.6 of justice which will be established. John is presenting Jesus more in his prophetic role. The prophet says and does God's word and suffers the consequences of doing so. Larkin suggests that the prophet figure in Zech.11.4 is compared with Moses, Moses is the *type* of a good prophet.<sup>81</sup> In support of this is evidence that Moses is 'shepherd of the flock' (Is.63.11), who leads God's people out of Egypt (Is.63.12). Like Moses, the prophet is detested by the people (Zech.11.8), and he gave them up to themselves. It is interesting that they are to perish because they have rejected God's witness. This resembles the idea of judgement in which the testimony to truth is that which results in their destruction.

Rev.7.17 presents Jesus as like Yahweh who cares and feeds his sheep (Is.49.10). Jesus has led the chosen witnesses out of slavery and oppression (Rev.15.2-5; 12.14; 21.2, 12-13; cf. Is.49.18). Rev.7.17 relies on the tradition in Is.49.6 linking the tribes of Israel with the nations. John is aware of this making the link himself (7.4-8 and vv.9-17) thus using tradition to critique those who reject the idea that salvation is for

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<sup>81</sup>Larkin, (1994) 115-116.

all.<sup>82</sup> Revelation is showing that Jesus will be a shepherd to the New Israel, the 144000 are reinterpreted in the light of the nations. The influence of Is.49, with its new exodus imagery, on Rev.7.17 supports a connection with Moses. A further text in support of the Moses connection is 15.3 in which Moses is only here explicitly named. The reworking of the song of Moses (Ex.15.11) by Revelation, as Bauckham notes, is in line with the most universalistic strain in the OT hope: the expectation that all the nations will come to acknowledge the God of Israel and worship him. Also he notes the shift of emphasis in the significance of the new exodus, from an event by which God delivers his people by judging their enemies to an event which brings the nations to acknowledge the true God.<sup>83</sup> The song of Moses becomes the song of the Lamb. Both are servants of God. The Lamb is the new Moses who leads to a new exodus in which it is hoped that all peoples will be won.

The wiping away of every tear (7.17c also 21.4) is clearly influenced by Is.25.8 and Jesus is Yahweh's representative in this message of comfort to those who are afraid of the consequences of living a life opposed to the values of the world. The Lamb as a shepherd figure is seen in 14.4 and 7.17. In the former the Lamb is presented as one who is followed wherever he goes, as Bauckham has noted, their following implies their faithfulness as far as death, since the Lamb was led to the slaughter (Is.53.7; Rev.5.6).<sup>84</sup> In 7.17b the Lamb 'will guide them to springs of living water' (cf.

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<sup>82</sup> View presented by Kraft, (1974) 131; Ford, (1975) 126-128; Fekkes, (1994) 173-174 finds this suggestion attractive but unconvincing on the basis of an understanding of the significance of the 144000.

<sup>83</sup> Bauckham, (1993b) 101.

<sup>84</sup> Bauckham, (1993a) 231; Sweet, (1979) 223 observes the double meaning of ὁπάγη which is often used in John's Gospel of Jesus' death (cf. 13.36-38).

Rev.21.6), again the sacrificial nature of the followers is present insofar as they will be guided by one who was himself led to the slaughter. The background underlying the 'springs of living water' may be in Ps.36.8-9 in which it is said that belonging to God is 'the fountain of life'. In their sacrificial deaths the Lamb guides his followers to be with God.

In sum, Jesus as a shepherd figure serves an important encouraging function. Modelled on Hebrew texts, John is presenting the Lamb as the Messianic suffering servant who will look after his people. In choosing his Lamb image John has also in mind the witness figures in Deutero-Isaiah, with allusion to Moses as one who was a shepherd and was rejected; similarly there is the prophet figure in Zech.11-12 who also is modelled on suffering ideas attached to leaders. However, the key to Rev.7.17 is that Jesus is a leader who has suffered but now leads as Yahweh's representative.

#### *4. Conclusions*

It has been observed that imagery is controlled by rhetorical purposes of persuasion and argument in terms of internal-debate among groups who share similar cultural-linguistic traditions. 1) Lamb highlights the sacrificial nature of Jesus' life and death and draws comparisons between Jesus and Isaac and the suffering servant of Is.53. Perhaps the passover lamb, if atonement ideas were attached to that particular Lamb in the first-century, is also in the mind of John. 2) Lamb links with the witness/martyr tradition which fits with the purpose of John's work of encouraging his community to be faithful to death. 3) John depicts the church in relationship with the Lamb, the new Israel that will conquer through sacrifice. 4) In using Lamb he critiques the Jewish military expectation of a messiah.

John has chosen his image not on the basis of his knowledge of lambs, but in terms of their function in the OT. Lamb in no way is an adequate metaphor for an active resister such as a martyr. However, Lamb was attached to previous suffering figures in the OT, not military or warrior *types*. Thus, John has woven this imagery into holy warfare imagery resulting in a text that utilises the good of holy war tradition, namely justice, in such a way that the idea of advocating hatred was transformed and hoped for the transformation of the sinner. This is a unique construction of imagery that hates compromise with 'lies', but which seeks transformation on the basis of truth. Such a depiction of Jesus compares well with Gandhi's *satyagrahi*.

## Chapter 11

### REVELATION 19.11-16: THE RIDER ON THE HORSE

Jesus has been seen as the pierced one, a sacrificial Lamb, a humanlike victim of the oppressing, powerful followers of the beast, but now in Rev.19.11-16 the imagery is reminiscent of a Hollywood epic hero in the tradition of 'Rambo' rather than a suffering servant in the tradition of 'Gandhi'. If 19.11-16 were separated from the previous chapters, the Rider would be the Davidic king riding upon his war horse to establish justice (see Ps.45.4) slaying the enemy beneath him similarly to Is.63.1-6. Sweet asks: 'can John be simply echoing the OT? Can Christ finally conquer in the manner of the beast?'<sup>1</sup>

#### 1. Review

Ford argues that the controlling background to the crushing rider is Philo's *De Praemis et Poenis* 16.95 which depicts the Messiah as a man of war;<sup>2</sup> Yarbrow Collins believes that the suffering Lamb is transformed into the Divine Warrior in 19.11-16.<sup>3</sup> Kiddle sees Christ as one who slaughters the enemies with their blood upon his clothes.<sup>4</sup> Swete suggests that Jesus 'smites not by judgements only, but by the forces which reduce them to the obedience of faith'.<sup>5</sup> This more positive understanding, however, as Mounce observes, fails to take into account the slaughter (v.21).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Sweet, (1979) 232.

<sup>2</sup> Ford, (1975) 313

<sup>3</sup> Yarbrow Collins, (1992) 702.

<sup>4</sup> Kiddle, (1941) 384; also Beckwith, (1919) 733.

<sup>5</sup> Swete, (1922) 254-255.

<sup>6</sup> Mounce, (1977) 347.

Trampling the enemy can be seen in terms none other than violence. Ladd sees in the imagery the idea of 'purging out the evil'. He argues that there is no 'literal battle with military weapons'.<sup>7</sup> These readings are, of course, correct in seeing the depiction as metaphorical in order to express the eradication of violence. It is also correct to see the weapons as spiritual. However, has John in presenting Jesus as a violent warrior contradicted his previous presentation of Jesus as a suffering Lamb? Moreover, has enough account been taken of the imagery of trampling the wine-press? The idea of the blood on the garments of Jesus as the blood of his victims cannot be reconciled with the way of fighting previously attributed to Jesus. Corsini writes of the influence of 19.11-16 in leading to the whole book being considered 'a cruel vision which has also helped to make the Apocalypse into a message of a future ferocious revenge'.<sup>8</sup> Even those who see the blood on Jesus' garments as his own still suggests a future event of revenge similarly to T.Mos.10 in which martyrdom is an act that brings God to slaughter those who have martyred his followers. Bauckham, although he pursues in his detailed exegesis the idea of the transformation of the warfare metaphor, does not do so *vis-à-vis* the rider in chapter 19.11-16 - it is a warrior trampling his enemies. Bauckham and Hart emphasise that the image of the rider gives 'imaginative expression to the hope that God must finally remove evil from this world before it can be a new creation'. The image does not *describe* 'what will happen at the end of history', it is simply an imaginative expression.<sup>9</sup> They urge that 'people perish because

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<sup>7</sup> Ladd, (1978) 256.

<sup>8</sup> Corsini, (1983) 352.

<sup>9</sup> Bauckham and Hart (1999) 140.



they have thrown in their lot with the beast',<sup>10</sup> that is the historical reality and reflects the idea of the spiral of escalating violence which Bauckham suggests with his discussion of *jus talionis*.<sup>11</sup> Further, Bauckham and Hart, commenting on the images of condemnation in Revelation, emphasise that they are 'not literal depictions, they depict the unimaginable horror of rejection by God'.<sup>12</sup> Bauckham and Hart point out the consequences of their contention that eschatological language is imaginative, it is to avoid understanding the image 'in a way that is inconsistent with what we know of God and God's purpose in Christ'.<sup>13</sup> Therefore the rider or the images of punishment must be interpreted in the light of God's love and compassion. The problem with this is evident in the way different individuals, sects, and groups may read such imagery. However, Bauckham and Hart's point is helpful in emphasising that the image is not literal but an expression of ideas and that the imagery must be interpreted in the light of love and compassion. The vision for Bauckham and Hart is that the rider expresses hope that evil will be ended. Bauckham's understanding of justice in Revelation may lead to the picture of Revelation's Jesus as the crusher of his enemies.<sup>14</sup> Such an interpretation engenders the idea of martyrdom as prompting God to take revenge because of the slaughter of his faithful. Can this text be interpreted in a way that neither presents Jesus as a slaughtering warrior nor as one who gains victory by martyrdom similarly to Taxo whose martyrdom prompts God to take revenge? Discussion in this chapter finds helpful the work of Caird, Sweet and Harrington who

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<sup>10</sup> Bauckham and Hart (1999) 141.

<sup>11</sup> Bauckham, (1993b) 52.

<sup>12</sup> Bauckham and Hart, (1999) 146

<sup>13</sup> Bauckham and Hart, (1999) 147.

<sup>14</sup> Bauckham, (1993b) 105.

seek to see a rebirth of tradition in this text. Also Beale's observations regarding the inversion or ironic use of the OT by John will again prove a helpful insight.<sup>15</sup>

The suggestion here will be that John has transformed Jewish expectations of a military Messiah, popular among some, in the light of Jesus' teaching, life and death. Jesus never taught that he was a military type messiah, and his way of battle cannot be compared in any way to that of crushing his enemies and neither was his martyrdom to prompt God to take revenge on his account. Perhaps John responds to the expectation of some Jews that the Messiah would not be one who suffers, therefore attacking claims for Jesus. The process involved John in the labour of intertextuality. John appropriates a sequence of ideas gleaned from his tradition and rebirths the imagery in a way that sees Holy War transformed by martyrdom and even mocks the way of war that some seek.

## 2. *The War of the Rider (v.11)*

a. *Judging in Righteousness.* The Rider appears as one who judges (κρίνει). Bauckham suggests that the judgement can be illuminated by John 12:46-49 especially v.48.<sup>16</sup> Yet Jesus specifically states that *he is not a judge* (12.47). It is the testimony that he gives that will be their judge. In Matt.7.1 France associates κρίνω with 'condemning' so Jesus' words μὴ κρίνετε urge: 'not condemning'.<sup>17</sup> Caird observes the legal practice in ancient Israel, where disputes were settled before an assembly of townsfolk in the gate and every speaker was entitled to give his verdict. In this case

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<sup>15</sup> Beale, (1999) 94-96.

<sup>16</sup> Bauckham, (1993b) 106.

<sup>17</sup> France, (1987) 142.

the witness *judges* because it is on his evidence that the legal victory turns (cf. Matt.12.41-42; Lk 11.31-32; Rom.2.27 and Homer's *Iliad* 18.497-508).<sup>18</sup> Those who are not for truth reject the way of peace and justice symbolised in the new Jerusalem (those belonging to Babylon) whose husband is Jesus. On the one hand, God seeks the transformation of the sinner, on the other hand, there is destruction through their own violence and rejection of his word (cf. 1 Enoch 10.9; 4 Ezra 13). Therefore, Jesus is the source of condemnation insofar as those who reject it condemn themselves.

Jesus judges in righteousness. δικαιοσύνη is intimately connected with 'truth' and 'peace' as well as אמת, חסד and צדק. It is important not to read 'righteousness' uncritically from a modern perspective, i.e. as stern and unforgiving.<sup>19</sup> δικαιοσύνη is the opposite of violence (Ps.58.1-2). It is associated with steadfast love, peace and faithfulness (Ps.85.11; 89.13; 103.17). Throughout Genesis δικαιοσύνη translates חסד (19.19; 20.13; 24.27; 24.29; 32.11; also Ex.15.13; Is.63.7). In Is.32.17 the outcome of δικαιοσύνη is peace. חסד is related to 'truth' twenty-five times in the OT. Consequently, it is possible to translate Rev.19.11 into the following Hebrew:

ובחסד הוא שפט ולחם

Therefore, Jesus is presented as one who judges in accordance with the principles of חסד rather than the principles of violence. If Jesus and his followers' testimony (based on the principles of חסד) is rejected, then חסד will be rejected, and they will persist in violent lives which will become their judgement. Gandhi, for example,

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<sup>18</sup> Caird, (1984) 241.

<sup>19</sup> For a thorough study for the Hebrew basis of righteousness see Quell and Shrenk in TDNT II.174-225; also Onesti and Brauch, (1993) 827-837.

resisted his opponents not in violence but by steadfast love with no anger towards them. It was always Gandhi's hope that in facing his enemy in this way, steadfast love would transform the enemy. Similarly, Jesus faced his enemy in steadfast love and not with the sword.<sup>20</sup> Responding by dying rather than killing must be compelling to one who usually responds to the challenger by killing. Jesus' example presents a new paradigm and validates the truth claims he has made in that he was prepared to die for his beliefs; in not fighting he rejects the values of the condemner who is also the challenger (*using challenge-response game theory language*) and thus gains honour before the challenger. It thus acts as a witness to others in order to persuade the listener of the validity of the testimony.

b. *Fighting in Righteousness*. The Rider is said to make war (πολεμεῖ), but Rev.2.16 suggests that fighting with weapons of war is not the meaning intended by John (19.11c). All occurrences in Revelation, except one, of πολεμέω, have God's enemy as the subject and on each occasion violence is implied, thus being in antithesis with the use in 19.11 (cf. 12.17; 13.4; 17.14).<sup>21</sup> The occurrence in 12.17 expresses the defeat always of the enemy. Rev.12 represents in heaven what is happening on earth, and in this case is the defeat of the enemy by nonviolence (12.11).<sup>22</sup> John contrasts the way in which Jesus stands out against the enemy, not with weapons of war but because he is himself 'Faithful' and 'True', the very antithesis of war and killing.

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<sup>20</sup> This also may explain the Q saying [Matt.10.34ff/Lk.12.51ff]: 'not peace but a sword'. Jesus' witness will bring about division because the time of decision is forced upon people. If they chose violence there will be increased violence. See Black, (1984) 287-294.

<sup>21</sup> Klassen, (1966) 305 discusses also the significance of πολεμέω drawing similar conclusions.

<sup>22</sup> Hanson, (1957) 167.

John has rebirthed πολεμέω in the context of the cosmic court setting where ‘truth’ is the measuring rod in establishing whose testimony, way of life and deeds, are true. πολεμέω in the LXX is never juxtaposed with δικαιοσύνη. John’s predilection for juxtaposing contradictory imagery such as Lion and Lamb should not surprise the reader of Rev.19.11. Here John has linked together πολεμέω and δικαιοσύνη. Perhaps there is some irony in this juxtaposition. Fighting is an action contradictory to Revelation and indeed truth. Yet what Jesus does is fight in truth, but only because he does so in his faithfulness to God and through not killing. John has in mind specifically Is.11.4 regarding the judging and fighting in righteousness.<sup>23</sup> There are other parallels (Ex. 15.13; Pss.9.4; 67.5; 72.2; 96.13). Psalm 72 has the king judging in righteousness (v.2a). A verse later, it is written: וַיִּדְכָּא עוֹשֵׁק (v.4b). In Ps.45 the king is said to be a rider who rides forth for ‘truth’ (v.4). He is said to love righteousness and hate wickedness (v.7).

Jesus is the Messianic king who will rule and judge in righteousness and cause the end of the unrighteous (cf. Is.11.4-9; Ps.72.2). Envisaged is the time when all war and enmity will vanish (cf. Is.11.6-9). Similarly, the Rider will rule the new Jerusalem, with his wife (cf. Ps.45.9), in justice and peace.

c. *Conclusion.* There is little to suggest that the Rider is a slaughtering warrior; moreover, the depiction so far coheres well with Jesus as a Lamb. The establishment of the new Jerusalem (Rev.21-22) meant that people must decide whether they belong to the way of the Lamb or not. The servant is one who would be metaphorically God’s witness in the cosmic court, his word would be uncompromising and the content

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<sup>23</sup> Fekkes, (1994) 223-224.

would be that the way of the world is not truth. A modern example conveying something of what John is expressing is that of an alcoholic who is told that their way is killing themselves and others, and that a transformation is needed. The teller of this truth would not be appreciated! Similar is the usage in Is.49.2 and Rev.19.11, 15.

### 3. *Weapons: The Sword of the Word and the Rod of Iron (v.15)*

a. *Shepherding or Slaying.* There is an intratextual connection between Rev.2.27, 7.17 and 19.15 in which ποιμαίνω occurs. It is generally agreed that underlying ποιμαίνω is רעה which, depending on its pointing, can mean either 'to slay' or 'to shepherd'. John is playing on this double meaning of רעה ironically, a point that Beale picks up on.<sup>24</sup> The positive side of the 'rod' is seen in Ps.23.4 when it is described as a comfort:

שבטך ומשענתך המה ינחמני

John has made an exegetical link between Pss.2.9 and 23.4. He sees the intertextuality between the texts and develops the double meaning of the word. In this type of reading it is possible to observe that those who reject the nonviolent witness, will continue in their violence which will be the cause of their destruction. The use in 2.27 and 19.15 may tend to lead to a more violent reading; however, John's use in 7.17 suggests one who cares for his sheep (Is.49.10). This is probably intentional. Jesus cares and seeks the transformation of sinners, but knows there is a double-edge to his testimony. Caird comments: 'The only "iron bar" God needs to reduce the rebellious nations to submission is the Cross of his Son and the martyrdom of his saints'.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Beale, (1999) 267.

<sup>25</sup> Caird, (1984) 245.

b. *The Sword of the Word*. There is disagreement *vis-à-vis* the significance of ‘sword of the word’. John writes:

καὶ ἐκ τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ ἐκπορεύεται ῥομφαία ὀξεῖα, ἵνα ἐν αὐτῇ παταξῇ τὰ ἔθνη  
καὶ ποιμανεῖ αὐτοὺς ἐν ῥάβδῳ σιδηρᾷ (19.15a cf. 1.16; 2.27 cf. 2 Thess. 2.8)

It has been argued that the key to understanding the sword imagery is the witness/forensic background. According to Isaiah (49.2), God’s servant/witness has a mouth like a sharp sword and four verses later (49.6) is described as being a light to the nations (cf. Hos. 6.5; Heb.4.12; Eph. 6.17; Pseudo-Phocylides 124; 1QH 5.10-15). Yarbrow Collins emphasises Wis.18.14-16 in which the word is compared to a sword that slaughters.<sup>26</sup> However, Yarbrow Collins fails to see that the imagery of the sword in Wis.18.14-16 is controlled by the witness theme. Heb.4.12 expresses the idea that the word of witness is sharper than the sword in that it confronts each person and nation with the truth of their violent and oppressing way.<sup>27</sup> Ford understands sword to be influenced by Ps.2.9 and Ps.Sol. 17.24, 27. Here ‘rod of iron’ is associated with ‘word of his mouth’ as it is in Rev.19.15 (cf. 2.6).<sup>28</sup> Ps.Sol.17.24, like Rev.19.15, presents the iron rod in synonymous parallelism with the ‘word of mouth’, although ‘sword’ is not mentioned. Like Rev.19.15 the concern of Ps.Sol 17.24-25 is that sinners will be condemned by the thoughts of their hearts. Ford fails to see the anti-war theme and compassionate nature of the king who is the Messiah (Ps.Sol.17.32), who will not rule

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<sup>26</sup> Yarbrow Collins, (1979) 135; Caird, (1984) 244 and Sweet, (1979) 283 see this text as partly underlying the title ‘Word of God’. Barker, (1996) 136 connects Wis.18.15 with the witness theme of Deutero-Isaiah 49.2)

<sup>27</sup> Caird, (1984) 244.

<sup>28</sup> To this extent Caird, (1984) 245 probably pushes the significance of the sword as replacing the rod in Rev.19.15 too far.

by war and fear and who hopes not for the day of war (Ps.Sol.17.33b). He will have compassion on all nations who stand before him (Ps.Sol.17.34b).<sup>29</sup> Moreover, he strikes the earth not with the sword, but with the word of his mouth (Ps.Sol.17.35a cf. Is.11.4). Indeed:

‘he will not rely on horse and rider and bow’ (17.33).

This means a nation or person must make a decision to accept truth or reject it. If the latter, their destruction will be their own doing. Sweet suggests, therefore, that the rod is an iron bar to those who ignore the testimony and a shepherd’s crook to those who respond (cf. Ps.23.4).<sup>30</sup>

c. *Weapons of War: 4 Ezra 13 and Enoch 10*. Bauckham sees 4 Ezra 13 in part as a polemic against apocalyptic militarism; victory will not be achieved by military means.<sup>31</sup> The Rider, like the mythological figure in 4 Ezra 13, when faced with violence does not fight back with the weapons of war:

‘And, lo, as he saw the violence of the multitude that came, he neither lifted up his hand, nor held up his sword, nor any instrument of war’ (4 Ezra 13.9 cf. Is.2.4; Mic.4.3-4)

The figure destroys the violent with his flaming breath, sparks and tempests (v.10, 38 cf. Is.11.4). What is described as proceeding from the mouth here, as in Revelation, is the judgement that comes against those who reject the truth.<sup>32</sup> This is explained clearly

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<sup>29</sup> That is those who reverently stand before God or the Messiah.

<sup>30</sup> Sweet, (1979) 96.

<sup>31</sup> Bauckham, (1993a) 219-220.

<sup>32</sup> B. Longenecker, (1995) 79 in his discussion on 4 Ezra 13 notes the similarity in idea with Ps.Sol. 17.33-35: ‘The man needs no weapons or instruments to carry out his defeat of those who oppose him’.



in v.38; what proceeds, flame etc. from the mouth are explained by the author. It is the witness against them which lays before them their evil thoughts (13.38). The 'flame' of v.38 links in also with the description of the eyes of the Rider: 'eyes like flames of fire' (Rev.19.12) and which belongs to the one who 'searches minds and hearts' (Rev.2.23) and condemns sinners with their own thoughts (cf. Ps.Sol.17.25). Moreover, violence is synonymous with them, whereas the chosen are synonymous with 'peace' (v.12). It is their own violence that will devastate sinners (v.31; cf.12.27-28; 15.15, 35; also Zech.8.10; Rev.13.10).<sup>33</sup> Their evil thoughts and torments will be the cause of the torture which is *like* a flame, and their destruction will be the law, which is *like* a fire (v.38). Although a 'word' is not said to be the cause of the enemy's demise, 'word' is connected with the law (Ex.34.28; Deut.4.13; 10.4).

Similarly, in 1 Enoch 10, the message is about the destruction of the wicked (vv.1-2). The source of evil (sin is written upon him v.8) is represented in the fallen angel, Azazel, who is bound in the desert under the rocks that the earth may no longer be corrupted (v.7). The Lord sends Gabriel against the wicked (v.9). Being 'sent' means setting them against each other that they may be destroyed in the fight (cf. v.12 and Zech.8.10). The unrighteous are the violent ones who live by no law and oppress the righteous (v.17). In order to establish a just society, described as peaceful (vv.17-22), the violent ones must be excluded as the new order would not be peaceful. However, it is their violence that brings their destruction.

Therefore, central to the judgement and punishment of the wicked is the principle

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<sup>33</sup> It is interesting to note Jer.2.19 in which it is reported that 'your apostasies will convict you'.

Apostasy is to compromise with the values contrary to God's law, and therefore must be associated with violence. It is their own actions which convict them and bring about their destruction.

of *jus talionis*. Judgement is the time for the destroying of the destroyers (Rev.11.18). They will be destroyed by the weapons with which they have killed (16.6; 18.6; 22.18-19; cf. Wis.11.16). John sees the consequences of the eschatological *jus talionis* as their destruction because of their violence. God's representative, the Rider, is associated with righteousness, truth and faithfulness, the antithesis of violence. Consequently, violence cannot remain in that which he has created. Therefore, God's word will be the ultimate cause of their destruction. Violence cannot exist in God's completed creation as the ruling principle is 'peace'.

d. *The Word of God (19.13b)*. John reports that the name of the Rider is ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ. This phrase occurs five-times in Revelation (1.2, 9; 6.9; 19.13b; 20.4). Only in 19.13b is the phrase translated as a title: 'The Word of God'. The background to this phrase is Wis.18.15-16. Caird writes: 'The word to which Jesus bore testimony in his life and death is now recognized to be indistinguishable from the person of the witness'.<sup>34</sup> This is supported by the observation that among the occurrences of 'word of God' it is equated with 'the testimony of Jesus'. Jesus is equivalent to the task he has achieved. Now his testimony will become the judgement on those who reject it. This does not suggest a military warrior, but a warrior who has carried out his war against idolatry and violence in his obedience to God by testifying to the word of God.

#### 4. *Trampling the Wine-press*

The idea of trampling the vineyard, both in Rev.14.17-20 and 19.15, is influenced particularly by Joel 3.13 and Is.63.1-6 and tradition represented in Palestinian Targum

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<sup>34</sup> Caird, (1984) 244; see Rissi, (1972) 25.

(PT) Gen.49.11. From the PT it can be seen that the idea of a military Messiah related to the trampling Yahweh of Is.63 had a precedent in Jewish thought. The issue here is that traditions existed in Jewish circles about a bloody, violent Messiah that necessitated a response from John. McNamara writes of PT Gen.49.11:

‘It appears that in this we are in the presence of a very old pre-Christian rendering which is quite in accord with the expectations of the warlike Messiah who, as we know from Josephus and other sources, was awaited by the Jews in the NT period’ (see *War* 6.312f; Tacitus *Hist.* 513; Suetonius *Vesp.* 4).<sup>35</sup>

a. *Targum Genesis 49.11*

‘How beautiful is the King Messiah who is to arise from among those of the house of Judah! He girds his loins and goes out to wage war on those that hate him, and slays kings with their rulers, making the mountains red with the blood of their slain and making the hills white with the fat of their warriors and his vestments are soaked in blood. He is like the presser of grapes’.<sup>36</sup>

PT intertextually links MT Gen.49.11 and Is.63.1-6. A warrior Messiah is expected to crush his enemies while soaking his garments in their blood (cf. Is.63.2-3). PT Gen.49.11 illustrates the extent to which Is.63.1-6 was perhaps popular among Jewish exegetes near to the time of John. Rev.19.11-16 esp.v.15 also picks up on Is.63.1-6, however, with a difference that will be seen.

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<sup>35</sup> McNamara, (1966) 233.

<sup>36</sup> Translated by McNamara, (1966) 232.

b. *Reinterpreting Joel 3.13 and Is. 63.1-6*

The winepress imagery in Rev.19.15 cannot be separated from Rev.14.14-20. The treader of the wine-press in 14.20 is the Rider in 19.15.<sup>37</sup> Therefore, it is important to look at Joel 3.13:

(a) שלחו מגל כי בשל קציר

(b) באו רדו כי מלאה גת

(c) השיקו היקבים כי רבה רעתם

Like (a) John has the gathering of the grapes at the right time (Rev.14.18). In (b) Yahweh's Chosen will tread the wine-press because it is full. Like Joel it is Yahweh's Chosen who will tread, yet for John the reason for gathering is because the grapes are ready (Rev.14.18) whereas in (c) the vats are said to overflow with great wickedness. John has preferred the readiness for trampling than the wine-press being full of great wickedness.

John was motivated by the fact that Jesus and his followers were not a good example of a military success story and Jesus is not the military warrior of PT Gen.49.11 (see Introduction, footnote 6). Therefore, John understands the vats to be overflowing not with the enemy, but with the oppressor's victims. Caird writes:

'John's object in this paragraph, then, has been to persuade the prospective martyrs that the world-wide carnage, in which their lives are to be forfeit, will not be simply the vindictive work of Babylon; it will also be the gracious work of the Son of Man, sending out his angels to reap a great harvest of souls, and

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<sup>37</sup> Bauckham, (1993b) 97.

incidentally to prepare the intoxicating cup that prove the ruin of the mother of harlots'.<sup>38</sup>

For John the vats overflowed with the violence of the oppressor, but not with the wicked themselves. The bodies of the victims will be gathered to God's wine-press and prepared for consumption by the enemy.

The oppressors are those who have slaughtered the innocent, and it will be a time of redemption for the slaughtered. In Is.63.6 Yahweh treads the peoples thus preparing the wine that must be drunk. Caird notes that the treading of the wine-press is the preparing for judgement and not a symbol for judgement, the wine itself is the punishment.<sup>39</sup> This has to be the case as the process of 'treading' is preparatory and not the final result. Wine is made to be consumed. This may have been suggested to John by Is.63.6b:

אֲשַׁכְּרֵם בַּחֲמִתִּי

Although v.6b does not state that they will be drunk on their own blood, it is proposed here that John so read it while influenced by Is.49.26a:<sup>40</sup>

וּכְעָסִים דָּמָם יִשְׁכְּרוּן

The oppressor (v.26a) will drink their *own* blood and become drunk on it as if drinking wine. However, their *own* blood is the blood of their victims, i.e. blood of their *own* violence, which maintains and pulsates through the body of an oppressor and is, therefore, metaphorically their *own* blood (cf. Rev.17.6). The Roman Empire, for example, is maintained on the basis of violence and oppression. Therefore, Rome

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<sup>38</sup> Caird, (1984) 193; Sweet, (1979) 232; Harrington, (1993) 194.

<sup>39</sup> Caird, (1984) 246.

<sup>40</sup> Harrington, (1993) 194 notes the importance of Is.49.26.

exists simply on the basis of the blood of its victims (cf. Ps.26.9; Prov.4.17, also v.16; Jer.51.34).<sup>41</sup> The innocent victims' blood becomes Babylon's blood, she drinks it and it is thus imbibed into her body as her own, sustaining and nourishing her continued violent, oppressive rule (cf. Num.23.24). Babylon is presented as one who drank the blood of the saints (17.6) and led astray the nations by causing the nations to drink the blood of her fury and fornication: τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τῆς πορνείας (Rev.14.8; 16.6a).<sup>42</sup> Similarly, in Jer.51.7 Babylon's wine will be that with which the nations will become powerless, i.e. they who compromise and engage in supporting Babylon in her violence, such blood is the blood she shed violently during her oppressive reign (cf. Is.49.26, 63.6; Jer.51.7 (cf. Ps.75.8; Wis.11.16));<sup>43</sup> Barbé observes the work of ethnologists regarding cannibalism when he writes: 'The warrior devouring the enemy's flesh does so not in a spirit of bestiality, but in order to absorb that enemy's valor and courage'.<sup>44</sup> The relevant point here is the idea of consuming the other in order to maintain one's own strength. John is influenced by this idea (see Rev.14.8; 16.6; 17.6).

Being drunk in the Bible suggests that one who is drunk is made helpless (cf. Is.51.17-23; Jer.25.27; 51.39, 57; Ps.60.2b). John understands the wine in Is.63.1-6 as

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<sup>41</sup> Prov.4.17 is clear, the oppressor is sustained by her violence. He cannot sleep unless he has done violence (v.16), thus he would perish without doing violence to someone. V.17 develops this, eating is vital to life, the oppressor survives by the food of wickedness and wine of violence.

<sup>42</sup> 16.6a could be read as the blood being given to the saints and prophets to drink. However, most take it as the enemy drinking the blood which they have shed, e.g. Mounce, (1977) 295; Morris, (1979) 194-195.

<sup>43</sup> So Caird, (1984), Sweet, (1979)) 232; Harrington, (1999) 193-194.

<sup>44</sup> Barbé, (1983) 10.

the blood of the oppressor's victims. Yahweh tramples as a preparation for punishment in order to make the wine that will make helpless the oppressor. In v.6b Yahweh says: **אֲשַׁכְּרֵם בַּחֲמָתִי** (v.6b) 'I made them drunk with my wrath'. There is a difficulty: if the oppressor has been trampled, how can he be made drunk? Some manuscripts have **וְאֲשַׁכְּרֵם** 'I break them', LXX: **κατεπάτησα** (I trampled). John may well have understood **אֲשַׁכְּרֵם בַּחֲמָתִי** and that which the murders will drink, i.e. the blood of their victims. V.6c reports:

**אֲוִרִיד לָאָרֶץ נִצָּחִם**

For John the lifeblood was the lifeblood of the victims of violence. In reaching the earth their lifeblood will cry for justice (cf. Is.63.4 and Rev.6.9). In Revelation the beast becomes drunk (**μεθύουσιν**) on the blood of the saints - also its blood of violence (16.6a; 17.6),<sup>45</sup> which is also becomes the wine of the fury of God: **τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ**, the very antithesis of the wine of the **θυμοῦ τῆς πορνείας** (14.8) which disempowered the nations but which will become the deadly portion for the oppressor. It is suggested here that the innocent victims and saints are cast upon the wine-press and trodden to prepare the wine which Babylon will drink, i.e. the results of her oppressive acts. It is also the blood of the fury of God (**τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ**) which Babylon will drink (14.10; cf. 16.6b; Is.49.26).<sup>46</sup> John alludes to the drinking of their own blood, but their blood is the blood of their violence upon which they become drunk (16.6; 17.6): **τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τῆς πορνείας**. In line

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<sup>45</sup> Caird, (1984)192; points out that vineyard is always used of God's chosen (Hos.10.1; Is.5.1-7; Jer.2.21; Ezek.17.1-8; Ps.80.8-13). Caird, (1980) 155 comments that Isaiah compares Israel with a vineyard in that it expresses the idea that God has planted and taken care of his vineyard.

<sup>46</sup> Harrington, (1993) 194 draws upon Is.49.26 for the idea that the enemies will drink their own blood.

with Is.63.6, the τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τῆς πορνείας would be logically associated with τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ. Babylon's own blood is in mind, i.e. τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τῆς πορνείας, viz the martyrs' blood which she has become drunk on (16.6; 17.6).<sup>47</sup> This may account for the list of defining genitives: τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τῆς ὀργῆς τοῦ θεοῦ (19.15). The use of two words for 'anger' suggests that the blood is the blood of Babylon's fury (14.8), her own blood, and the wrath of God refers to the fact that their τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ has become ὀργῆς τοῦ θεοῦ, thus comparing well with Is.63.6, connecting their own blood that they will drink with God's wrath.<sup>48</sup> However, it could be argued that 19.15 says nothing about drinking wine, rather it is the crushing of the grapes that is important. Charles observes that the wine that flows from the wine-press is connected with the cup of wrath: 'The two ideas of the winepress (14.19) and the cup of the wrath (14.10) are here [i.e. 19.15] combined, and mean that from the wine-press trodden by Christ flows the wine of the wrath of God, of which his enemies are to be made to drink'.<sup>49</sup> It is possible that the eschatological banquet in 19.17-18 is linked insofar as the wine which is prepared for Babylon to drink, her own blood - the blood of her violence, is essentially the violence that will come upon Babylon. She will drink the cup of her own wrath, she will be destroyed similarly to the way she destroyed. This also links with Is.49.26a. Here the

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<sup>47</sup> Caird, (1984) 202ff writes: 'when the ocean of blood which the worshippers of the monster have shed contaminates their own water supply, so that Babylon staggers to her appointed doom, drunk with the blood of saints and prophets; Sweet, (1979) 255 suggest 17.6 refers to the slaughter by Nero.

<sup>48</sup> To hide from God's wrath is to refuse to hear the message of the cross which is a decision to live a life of violence and oppression (see chapter 10 section 3 part c).

<sup>49</sup> Charles, (1920) 137; Caird, (1984) 246.



oppressors will eat their own flesh and drink their own blood; in Rev.19.17-18 it is said that birds will consume the bodies of the oppressor which compares well with Ezek.39.17-20. Yet there is a similar concept here: there will be violence. The violent will consume the violent and there will be enough even for the birds in mid-heaven.

*Subject of the treading prepares the wine of the wrath of God.* As with Is. 49.26 and 63.1-6, the overall subject behind all that happens is God. John draws upon Psalms 45; 72 and 110 and Is.11.4, thus presenting Jesus as God's representative, as the Rider who is the prime-mover of all that happens to Babylon. The very cosmos is created on the principles of God's **שלום, אמת, חסד, צדק, משפט** (MT: Ps.72.2-3; Ps.89.15). God's representative, the Rider, is instrumental in the perpetuation of such principles. That violence destroys itself in Is.49.26 and 63.6 leads Trito-Isaiah to equate the destruction of the enemy with **חסד** (63.6-7). Thus, John has Jesus as the subject of the treading of the wine-press in 19.15. John tells his readers that it is the faithful witnesses who prepare for judgement by rejecting violence and injustice, and perishing at the hands of Babylon, consequently becoming the blood which will become that which does not sustain Babylon, that trodden by Jesus in God's wine-press, that wrath of God by which she is rendered helpless. Therefore, John places the proto-faithful witness as the one who prepares for the establishment of **שלום, אמת, חסד, צדק, משפט**. Jesus does this by his witness until death.

*The horse.* In Is.63.1-6 there is the more plausible picture of Yahweh trampling the winepress with his *feet* without the aid of a horse. The added detail of the horse in

Rev.19.15 has not drawn much discussion from scholars, but surely it is a significant addition to the imagery with a precise purpose. Carrell has suggested that the background to the horse addition lies within angelology and that the image is of an angelic horseman.<sup>50</sup> However, it is more likely that John is influenced by Ps.45.4 for his horse imagery, in which the Davidic king rides forth for justice and truth. Such a tradition is clearly a military one. In Ps.Sol.17.33, with its anti-war presentation, it is said:

‘he will not rely on horse and rider and bow, nor will he collect gold and silver for war’ (cf. 4 Ezra 13)

It has been seen that John follows Ps.Sol 17 for his imagery regarding the iron rod and word of his mouth (17.24). It is not obvious that he follows 17.33; however, the argument here is that John has done so. It is clear to any first century reader that a horse would not be treading a winepress. Rather, it is possible that John has placed Jesus on a horse, an expectation of some Jews for the Davidic king (Ps.45.4), but in such a way that the picture is implausible. John is intentionally subverting the idea of a warrior on a war horse through the irony of a horse treading grapes. John may be alluding to Ps.20.7 in which the Psalmist contrasts those who trust in chariots and horses and those who trust in Yahweh. The whole idea of a military warrior is mocked.<sup>51</sup> This may be an example of John inverting the expectation of a warrior in a way that Ps.Sol.17.33 did not.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Carrell, (1997) 206.

<sup>51</sup> Note contrast with the expectation of a humble King in Zech.9.9 riding on an ass; not the act of a military King.

<sup>52</sup> For discussion of inverted uses of the OT see Beale, (1999) 94-96.

*Blood on the Garments of the Rider* (19.13 cf. Is.63.2. PT. Gen.49.11). The blood marks the rider's attire because the wine-press has been trodden. However, consistently with John's readings of Is.63.1-6 and Is. 49.26, Babylon's own blood is the blood that she has shed, it is τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τῆς πορνείας (14.8; 17.6). Thus, when John reads of the blood that is on Yahweh in Is.63.3, it is indeed Babylon's blood that is on his garments, but her blood, τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τῆς πορνείας, is the blood of Jesus and the saints; thus the blood on Jesus' garments is his own for he suffered and he was Babylon's τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τῆς πορνείας which the whore drinks (17.6 cf. Is.49.26).<sup>53</sup> It is unnecessary to suggest that despite the closeness of Is.63.3 there is no connection between the blood on the garments and the treading of the wine-press simply on the grounds of logical sequence, i.e. that he has the blood on his garments before the treading. Fekkes points out that such an approach suffers from over-literalism and that presenting events in their logical sequence is not a major concern of John.<sup>54</sup> However, it is the closeness to Is.63 that argues for the blood being connected with the treading. Jesus is the treader because he is the prototype martyr who has shown the way to victory.

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<sup>53</sup> There is some dispute regarding βεβαμμένον 'to dip'. Some prefer ῥαντίζω 'to sprinkle'.

<sup>54</sup> The blood as his enemies: Beckwith, (1919) 733; Kiddle, (1941) 384; Holtz, (1962) 172; Mounce, (1977) 345; Müller, (1984) 237; Fekkes, (1994) 198; Aune, (1998) 1057; *pace* Rissi, (1972) 24; Morris, (1979) 231; Caird, (1984) 242-243; Sweet, (1979) 283; Bauckham, (1993a) 106; Harrington, (1993) 192.

## 5. *Summary and Conclusions*

In approaching the figure of the Warrior Rider, the same problems have been faced as in the discussion on the Lamb when apparently contradictory images are juxtaposed: the Lion and the Lamb, for example. The same principles have been applied, based on the assumption that John works within a particular cultural system and is faced with the text and context. It is proposed that John is motivated to use and develop his own traditions in conflict with those who attack his understanding of Jesus and ideology. John's work subverts and mocks certain readings and interpretation of the tradition to which he is one heir in presenting Jesus as a nonviolent, faithful witness whose message was for all nations. It is the suggestion that John appropriated the tradition among some synagogue Jews, possibly even some church members, that the Messiah would be a Davidic, military conquering hero,<sup>55</sup> and for rhetorical purposes rebirthed the tradition. Jesus was not a military leader and from the earliest traditions regarding Jesus' teaching, he appears not to have so taught (see Introduction, footnote 6); therefore, his presentation as a Rider with the blood of his enemies on his garments is incongruous with one who was nailed on the cross, a death which, for Jews, rendered the executed person unworthy of being a messiah (Deut.21.23). John engages intertextually with his conventions, and flouts them. Such was Jesus' life that it leads

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<sup>55</sup> There is ample evidence that a Davidic king would trample down his enemies in the OT. John takes up such Holy War traditions in that they seem so inappropriate for depicting Jesus. But Targums and TJos 19.8 suggest such an understanding. Maybe John attacks such. However, as Klassen, (1992) 869 has shown, the idea of a military victory was not necessarily an expectation of all Jews. There is some evidence that there was an anti-military group among Jews. This has been shown in chapter 3 in which martyrdom was a preferred action rather than killing among some Jews. However, nonviolence can have different motives which are not always Gandhian as was seen in chapter 3.

to a new engagement with his cultural system. There were those who were opposed to the teaching of Jesus and who sought to subvert his followers. Jesus, it would appear, was not necessarily the expected Messiah type, as Rev.19.11-16 might suggest, or even the Royal Psalms if read messianically. It is inconceivable to make sense of Rev.19.11-16 in the obvious way *vis-à-vis* Jesus. He was in no way a warrior and from the earliest traditions about Jesus there is nothing to suggest that Jesus was seen in any way other than that of a suffering, martyr figure. Therefore, John responds to certain interpretations and expectations regarding the Messiah in Jewish tradition, ones which subverted Jesus' teachings and John's and his readers' understanding. John does this by reinterpreting the Rider in the light of the Lamb. It is the Lamb image that alerts the modern reader to the subtle meanings inherent in 19.11-16. Throughout Revelation the emphasis has been on the suffering that God's chosen must suffer; therefore, those trodden can be only those who must suffer in order for victory to be achieved. It is inconceivable that John could suddenly abandon his controlling ideology of suffering to achieve victory. Jesus is depicted treading the grapes because it is Jesus who has been instrumental in establishing God's kingdom, which means the end of the beast's reign. However, it is also his and the martyrs' blood that will bring about the end of the beast's reign. The followers of the beast will become drunk on their blood, the blood of their oppression. Therefore, it is indeed Jesus' own blood marking his garments as well as the blood of all the saints.

It would appear therefore that there is nothing in this text to contradict the previous presentations of Jesus. Jesus the Rider, like the faithful witness, pierced one, and the Lamb, is a prophet against the principles of power and violence and who exemplifies a nonviolent revolutionary in the tradition of Gandhi, that is, one who seeks through

love to transform the enemy. His witness and death reveal to the world's oppressors that if they continue in their violence, they will bring about their own death by violence. The vision of the rider is not about the martyr getting his revenge, but a vision showing that the violent will drink their own punishment. Their acts of violence and greed are their own punishment. Yet Jesus and his followers have died by violence although they have not lived violently, there still is the belief that by their faithfulness they will be with God eternally and that the violent cut themselves off from God and thus stand outside the new Jerusalem (Rev.21.27).

## SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS

The concern of this thesis has been to establish to what extent Revelation, and more particularly Revelation's Jesus, can be considered nonviolent in the sense of Gandhian ideology. Can the Jesus of Revelation be considered a *satyagrahi*?

This thesis began with a discussion as to the extent to which the Jesus of earliest tradition could be considered an exemplar of a nonviolent teacher. The works of W. Wink and C. Myers are important in showing Jesus as a nonviolent revolutionary. However, it was observed that the background from which Jesus and John emerge had a strong tradition of violence, in the context of holy war, in establishing God's kingdom. Yet it has been seen that also within Jewish tradition, a nonviolent ideology and suffering would achieve and bring about God's kingdom. The dominant ideology among the Synoptists is of such a nonviolent, non-retaliatory Jesus. Those who have been deeply impressed by the nonviolent Jesus of the Synoptic tradition see the Jesus of Revelation as unlike the Jesus of the gospels. Revelation has sometimes been attacked as a vile, misanthropic text.

In characterizing the late twentieth century mind-set, it is easy to establish violence and power as the dominating values upon which our society is based.<sup>1</sup> Also notable is the easy way in which violence is justified as a legitimate way of maintaining justice, as if the two are inseparable. It is common to hear politicians claiming that 'force must be met by force'. It is a common genre in Hollywood films to see the evil, violent beast met by the violent force of the conquering hero. Such violence is 'redemptive violence' a violence that has dominated the history of humankind.<sup>2</sup> So it is not surprising that the

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<sup>1</sup> It has been the dominating value of humanity throughout history.

<sup>2</sup> Wink, (1984), pp.17-31.

figure of Jesus in Revelation is so portrayed by interpreters influenced by such a society and heirs to such a history.<sup>3</sup>

In *part one* the contexts from which John would draw and to which he would respond were examined. The OT and later Jewish literature provide tradition which attacks all who plunder and humiliate others. In later Jewish literature a development of the OT idea of vengeance against the antagonist was detected. Martyrdom is seen as a strategy to prompt God to act in trampling Israel's enemies, whereas there is more hope for the nations in the OT. In chapter 2 martyrdom as a social phenomenon was discussed as a significant legitimating force in society and a response to violent forces. This was Gandhi's response to his violent antagonists in order to influence them away from their violent ways. Martyrdom is a revolutionary action - to die for others. In chapters 5 and 6 the particular social setting was established and Revelation's response to it was considered. The Domitian setting was dominated by greed and oppression under the subterfuge of the *pax Romana*. Compromise from foreign powers was cleverly and expediently sought by Rome. However, John saw compromise as to lose honour before the challenger and ultimately to bring dishonour upon God. John understood martyrdom as a way of gaining honour before his challenger and his own society. Ultimately, it was to defend God's honour against the followers of the beast. The contest was between violence and nonviolence. To this extent, it has been concluded that Revelation is the literature of *satyagraha*, that hopes for the transformation of its antagonist by winning the contest and showing that violence and greed lead to destruction. This is a development of certain strands of the OT,

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<sup>3</sup> See Wainwright's history of interpretation of Revelation (1993). Interpretation is dominated by redemptive violent readings.



especially Deutero-Isaiah. It was suggested that such a development was worked out in relationship with other Jews whose theology drew more upon the vengeance themes in the OT (especially in holy war tradition) in which God would smite the enemies. In Revelation, the smiting would be self-inflicted yet God is still the source of the smiting, he gives them up to their violence. Similarly in Gandhi's understanding, the rejection of nonviolence would result in destruction (see Introduction Section 4)

In part two, descriptions of Jesus in Revelation were examined. He was seen as a faithful witness who, in his life and death, represented God and defended God's honour in the way in which he faced his antagonists. His way was nonviolent and sacrificial. His way of gaining honour for God was to die rather than to kill. Killing would be to forsake the very principles upon which God created the world: love, nonviolence and compassion. In all other descriptions: pierced one, humanlike figure, Lamb and Rider, Jesus is not one who smites the antagonist. His honour is gained in martyrdom. In 19.11-16, the most problematic vision of Jesus, it was concluded that the idea of treading the wine-press depicts Jesus preparing for the new Jerusalem - a society based on the principles of nonviolence. Such a society can only be achieved when humanity converts to nonviolent principles. The slaughter is the result of rejecting Jesus' testimony, which is synonymous with living violent lives that will self-destruct insofar as such a way is contrary to God's creation. It was seen that in Gandhi's understanding, the persuasion of the enemy would be brought about by (1) reasoning, (2) emotional persuasion through suffering to show that the sufferer loves the opponent and (3) non-cooperation (see Introduction Section 4).

### *Studies of Revelation and this Study*

This thesis has been indebted to the labours of those involved in various areas of scholarship. *Methodologically*, conflict theory and intertextuality have been important to this thesis. The underlying presupposition of research has been to understand John as one who builds upon his tradition in the challenging setting of a powerful Rome and against those who reject or compromise Jesus within his own tradition. The importance of an internal Jewish debate is a key for understanding Revelation, as is the insight that the use of metaphor takes its starting point in the conflict between interpreters of the same tradition. In terms of exegesis, Rev.2.9 was shown to be connected with a debate over the extent to which one should compromise with Rome. The depiction of Jesus as a Lamb is again linked to debate, this time over the claims about Jesus being a suffering messiah and a reaction against the expectation of a Messiah being a military leader. In the vision of Jesus as a Rider, the setting is once more motivated by John's need to defend Jesus' honour and teaching of nonviolence against those who looked for a military leader.

In terms of exploring to what extent Revelation's understanding of Jesus compares with the Jesus of the gospels, it is hoped that this thesis has taken further the debate regarding Jesus as a nonviolent revolutionary leader. In developing this exploration, Gandhi's thinking about nonviolence was applied heuristically to the exegesis. In doing this 'nonviolence' has been precisely delineated. Nonviolence from this Gandhian perspective was used in comparing and contrasting various aspects of nonviolence and understandings of martyrdom within Jewish tradition in order to reach a point in which a conclusion can be reached as to what extent the Jesus of Revelation can be compared to Gandhi's *satyagrahi*.

Therefore, it is hoped that the interpretative approaches represented by perspective C have been shown to be closer in understanding the author of Revelation than have those who see Revelation as a digression from the nonviolent Jesus of the gospels.

*Points of comparison between Jesus of Revelation and Gandhi's Satyagrahi*

This thesis will conclude in the form of theses as to the extent to which Revelation's Jesus compares with Gandhi's ideal of the *satyagrahi*:

1. Jesus as a revolutionary is an overwhelming picture gained from this study. The Jesus of Revelation was in opposition to the values of the world such as power, oppression and violence similarly to the true *satyagrahi*.
2. His life was as a 'faithful witness' in the cosmic court of law against the world of violence, greed and aggrandizement. Jesus' testimony was of word, action and death, all of which set him against the values of the world represented in the form of idolaters, murders, liars etc. (see Rev.9.20; 21.8; 22.15) in order to persuade them to turn from their idolatry. Jesus is a faithful witness inasmuch as it is hoped that humankind, as a whole, can be released from its bondage to the values of the world. All suffering and death are brought about in the recurring spiral of violence and revenge. There is no sense that John saw Jesus as one outside of this punishment. All suffer the consequences of violence and oppression, the strong and the weak. Jesus suffers and dies at the hands of such values. Jesus is not, because of his suffering and death, one who stands in a position of power outside of suffering and punishment. He is not a typical revolutionary who projects evil on to someone else, one who must be eradicated, as for example Hitler did with the

Jews, or the Marxists with the bourgeoisie. Jesus is one who stands for all humankind, having experienced the consequences of its sin in his violent death. Instead of seeing it as despicable, he assumes the suffering of the other and thus changes their condition by forgiveness and acceptance.

3. In terms of the world, Jesus was a failure; he cannot be considered a powerful leader such as the Roman Emperor. Rather, Jesus is like a sacrificial Lamb, the very antithesis to power and might as the world sees it. Jesus is a deviant, rejected by the standards of the world, who refuses to abandon his testimony and chooses his place in society as an outsider. Indeed, in doing so he becomes victorious in that he did not apostatise and in his death he secured honour. Gandhi also was in many ways rejected and his policy of love and compassion resulted in his assassination.
4. Violence is the essence of maintaining a society of greed and oppression. Therefore, violent revolution is a contradiction in terms insofar as 'revolution' seeks fundamental change or reversal of conditions. Pursuing violent means to change the dominant ideology is to embrace that very ideology which the so called revolutionary seeks to eradicate. A 'true' revolutionary is, therefore, nonviolent, the very antithesis of the ideology dominant in the world. Therefore, intrinsic to revolution is the belief that the transformation of violence can occur. Jesus is the exemplar of this way.
5. Revelation urges non-cooperation with the world. Revelation in no way breaks with the figure of Jesus. Jesus exemplifies in his whole way of life the principle of noncooperation with the antagonist. To accept death rather than play the power

games of the antagonist is the ultimate expression of non-cooperation.

6. Jesus in Revelation is an exalted figure. His life was based on the principles of *satyagraha*, and that compares with Gandhi's understanding that the attainment of perfection is achieved only when a life is based on the principles of *satyagraha*, especially in the offering of one's life for another.
7. Revelation depicts Jesus in battle with the forces of violence. Victory is sought. As in Gandhi, this is a war only to the extent that it is a contest between nonviolence and violence. But still a war. Revelation portrays Jesus as conquering in his nonviolence, suffering, witness and non-cooperation.

#### *Results of Examination*

Jesus as a nonviolent revolutionary is a dominant thesis for the Jesus of the gospels which has been shown ably by Wink and Myers et al. There is little ground for seeing the Jesus of Revelation as a corruption of the gospel's Jesus. The Jesus of Revelation is a nonviolent revolutionary comparable with the tradition of Gandhi's *satyagrahi* and the text itself is an able example of the ideology of *satyagraha*.

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