

Notes on the Book of Revelation

Before tackling this document, I had spent considerable time with **Notes on the Psalter** posted elsewhere on this Home Page. It was a task which offered an excellent opportunity to increase my acquaintance of the psalms through a closer reading of the Hebrew text. These religious poems express the entire range of human sentiments face to face with divine reality. They are marked by a desire for future restoration or wholeness which the Christian tradition sees as effected through the person of Jesus Christ. While the Psalter certainly deals with the past and present dimensions of time, much of what it expresses is centered upon the not yet realized future. The emphasis upon hope which expects full attainment made me look elsewhere in the Bible for similar themes; the Book of Revelation or Apocalypse was the first that came to mind.

Perhaps the inauguration of a new millennium some years ago had an unconscious influence on this project, for at a special time like this people are concerned with *ta eschata* or “last things.” On the other hand, I hesitated to comment on Revelation because a tendency exists among some Christians to take the images of this book literally. While the Catholic tradition does not subscribe to such a view, Revelation’s vivid images nevertheless can give license to an active—indeed over-active—imagination with regard to the immaterial reality it describes. Even with these caveats in mind, the text by any standard is simply way out there.

Despite hesitations, I decided it would be helpful—not so much for the reader but for myself—to go through the text line by line and jot down some reflections; most observations are based upon both the Old and New Testaments. That is to say, the thoughts and images presented by Revelation have precedents and are intimately related to other parts of the Bible. These are not always evident at first glance, hence the need to look more closely at the original Hebrew and Greek texts.

Scholarly commentaries on the Book of Revelation abound, My intent is neither to duplicate nor to mimic them. I simply wish to offer a series of notes done in the monastic spirit of *lectio divina*, that special slow-paced reading of Scripture which disposes one to be in the presence of God. Apart from this, they have no value. *Lectio*’s approach is especially helpful for a controversial book as Revelation because the spirit of contemplative prayer puts this book into perspective. In many ways, *lectio divina* uncovers—for such is the literal meaning of *apocrypha*—an already existing reality. The obstructions preventing us from comprehending the underlying divine truths often stem from our unaided imagination. While most verses and words are examined, I have omitted those which are repetitive and have no direct bearing upon the contemplative dimension of *lectio divina*. The same applies to historical elements; they can be looked up in any suitable commentary.

Many Greek words discussed have other references. They are more or less random but intended to show a particular word's larger meaning. Greek nouns are generally cited in the nominative and verbs in the first person singular. Unless otherwise noted, nouns are given in the singular. The text of Revelation is the **Revised Standard Version**; all other biblical citations are also from the **RSV**.

Please note that this document contains two appendices. The first deals with Greek words which occur in Revelation. The second appendix deals with the Greek conjunctive *kai* which is variously translated in Revelation as and, when, then. *Kai* occurs with remarkable frequency which prompted making this second appendix.

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Chapter One

1-Vs. 1: The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants what must soon take place; and he made it known by sending his angel to his servant John.

The very first word of this book is *apolakupsis* as associated with the person of Jesus Christ (genitive), that is, as both belonging to him and originating from him. It is followed by the dative ('to him') signifying that God the Father was initiator of this revelation. The same verse continues with another dative ('to his servants'), intimating that the "to-ness" proper to Christ is shared by his servants. As the Introduction noted, *apokalupsis* points to an already existing (divine) reality which this book seeks to delineate.

Taxos or soon is connected with the immanent fulfillment of the indefinite "what" which is to take place, *ginomai*.

The divine *apokalupsis* is made known, *semaino* being a word designating the impartation of knowledge by a sign with future meaning. "He said this to show by what death he was to die" [Jn 12.33]. *Semaino* is directed to John-as-*doulos* by means of an angel or *aggelos*; note use of *doulos* (alternately as a slave) in "to his servants" just above. "In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph" [Lk 1.26-7]. Also note Mary as *doule*: "For he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden" [Lk 1.48]. In the verse at hand, God sends this angel, *apostello* being a verb associated with the divine commission of the Apostles and from which this noun is derived. "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John (the Baptist, Jn 1.6)."

1-Vs. 2: who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.

Here John has a three-fold commission:

1) A witness (verb: *marturein*) with respect to the divine *Logos* (word as expression), reminiscent of “He came for testimony, to bear witness to the light, that all might believe through him” [Jn 1.7].

2) With respect to the *marturia* of Jesus Christ, also as in Jn 1.7.

3) That which John saw, *eido* connoting knowledge. “I myself did not know him” [Jn 1.26]. Note the connection between *eido* and *apokalupsis*.

1-Vs. 3: Blessed is he who reads aloud the words of the prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written therein; for the time is near.

The first of seven blessings in Revelation, the others being 14.13, 16.15, 19.9, 20.6, 22.7 & 14. The term here as in vs. 3 is *makarios*, the Greek equivalent for the Hebrew ‘*ashry* as in Ps 1.1: “Happy is the man who walks in the Law of the Lord.” As pointed out in the **Notes on the Psalter** (elsewhere on this Home Page), ‘*ashry* connotes forward (continual) advancement. *Makarios* is far more static and used for each of the Beatitudes, Mt 5.3+.

Makarios has three verbs as objects: reading aloud, hearing and keeping (*anaginosko*, *akoueo* and *tereo*). The first refers to reading in public as opposed to in private. “And when this letter has been read among you” [Col 4.16]. The second pertains to those receptive to such *anaginosko*: Lk 11.28: “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it” [Lk 11.28]! The third is with regard to the written part of prophecy (*ta gegrammena*) which may be taken in conjunction with the reading aloud. The verb for to keep is *tereo*, whereas in Lk 11.28 it is *phulasso*. The former as in Jn 17.11 (‘Holy Father, keep them in your name’) and the latter as in Mt 19.20 (‘All these I have observed; what do I still lack?’).

The last part of vs. 3 has *kairos* for time which pertains to a special occasion, usually with reference to divine intervention. “My words which will be fulfilled in their time” [Lk 1.20]. Note the adjective *eggus* or near which here is almost redundant because a *kairos* by its very nature is *eggus*; this adjective is used most likely for emphasis or immanent realization.

1-Vs. 4: John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne.

The number seven represents completion much as the number twelve later as in **Revelation** (cf. 21.14); the original biblical basis of this number rests on the seven days of creation. Since John is addressing seven churches (*ekkklesia*), each one may intimate the creative power of God’s Spirit, that is, as if this *Ruach* were “moving over the face of the waters” [Gen 1.2] or the face of the new creation by means of the churches. In the verse at hand, it

is not so much John speaking to these seven churches as the *apokalupsis* which “God gave him” [vs. 1].

The apostle wishes grace and peace (*charis* and *eirene*) to these seven churches. “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you” [Jn 14.27], that is, not coming from himself but from God (the Father; Christ is mentioned in next vs.) who here is identified with the three features of time, present, past and future. “This Jesus who was taken up from you into heaven will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven” [Acts 1.11].

Closely associated with God are the seven spirits (*pneuma*) as in Is 11.2: “The spirit (*ruach*) of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.” Such spirits are equivalent to the seven churches in Asia. In the verse at hand, note their position, “before his throne,” *enopion*. “As I looked, thrones were placed and one that was ancient of days took his seat” [Dan 7.9].

1-Vs. 5: and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood.

In vs. 4 the implied God the Father is, was and is to come; to him was attributed *charis* and *eirene* which in vs. 5 are extended to Jesus Christ. The other three titles John gives him are:

- 1) “faithful witness” (*martus*; cf. related words in vs. 2).
- 2) first-born or *prototokos* as in Rom 8.29: “in order that he might be the first-born among many brethren.” In the verse at hand, *prototokos* is with respect to the dead.
- 3) ruler or *archon* with regard to earthly kings thereby signifying dominion over the temporal sphere. “While he was thus speaking, behold, a ruler came in and knelt before him” [Mt 9.18].

The second sentence continues through the next verse where Christ is attributed glory and dominion. It has presents two of three actions which Christ effected:

- 1) “loves us:” the verb *agapao* is used; note the present tense signifying continued agape.
- 2) “has freed us:” *luo* in the sense of loosening sins (*hamartia*); action has already taken place and most likely is associated with Christ’s crucifixion by the use of blood, *aima*. The loosening action of *luo* and blood intimate mutability or adaptability of divine action.

1-Vs. 6: and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

The third action effected by Jesus Christ which contains two elements:

1) kingdom or *basileia* which may be associated with divine rule: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” [Mt 3.2].

2) priests or *hiereus* (singular): “and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” [Ex 19.6]. Also cf. Rev 5.10. In the verse at hand, note the dative case: “to God” and “to his Father;” here the divinity and Father are separate yet the function of an *hiereus* is related to both.

The verse concludes with a doxology, again using the dative case (‘to him’): glory or *doxa* (connotes the divine *kavod* of **Old Testament** revelation) and dominion or *kratos*, the latter also meaning power or the effective use of kingly rule. “His dominion is from generation to generation” [Dan 4.3]. Note the familiar forever and ever (*eis tous aionos*, literally, ‘into eternities’). *Amen* represents acknowledgment by the congregation to what the priest or leader had just uttered.

1-Vs. 7: Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, everyone who pierced him; and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.

This verse contains parts of Dan 7.13 and Zech 12.10 respectively: “I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him.” “And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of compassion and supplication, so that when they look on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him as one mourns for an only child and weep bitterly over him as one weeps over a first-born.”

The verse at hand has Christ coming (present tense) with clouds or *nephele* (singular), the inverse of his ascension into heaven: “This Jesus who was taken up from you into heaven will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven” [Acts 1.11; also cited in vs. 4 above]. Compare this descent with that of the Holy Spirit of Pentecost, Acts 2.

Note that with reference to Dn 7.13, the visions take place at night, a time when vision is difficult compounded by the addition of clouds. Situated in the context of **Revelation**, people will have the ability to see Christ (‘Every eye will see him’) despite this double obscurity. In addition, those who pierced Christ (cf. Zech 12.10) will behold him as in Jn 19.34, reference to his crucifixion. As a result, blood and water flow out. “There are three witnesses, the Spirit, the water and the blood” [1 Jn 5.8]. In the larger context of Zech 12.10, God will pour out a spirit of compassion (*chen*) and supplication (*tachanun*); former implies favor and the latter a cry for mercy as in Ps 6.9: “The Lord has heard my supplication.”

Despite the fact that those who pierced Christ are few, the earth's tribes "will mourn for him;" note future tense with regard to these witnesses as opposed to the present. Compare the wounds of death with those in Jn 20.27: "Put your finger here and see my hands; and put out your hand and place it in my side."

Vs. 7 concludes with a two-fold affirmation *nai* (even so) and *amen* indicating that the future coming of Christ is assured.

1-Vs. 8: "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

Here Jesus Christ speaks for the first time as Alpha and Omega as in Is 44.6: "I am the first (*ri'shon*) and I am the last (*acharon*); besides me there is no god." Vs. 8 fleshes this out by use of three tenses, present, past and future; the present tense being "in between" Alpha and Omega, as it were, as well as seminally containing these two points. Christ speaks as *Logos* or Word and implies himself as being the alphabet in its fullness. Proper to Alpha and Omega as well as the three tenses of verbs is Christ as Almighty or *Pantokrator* as used in Rev 4.8, 11.17, 15.3, 16.7 & 17, 19.6 & 15, 21.22. The **Old Testament** precedent is shady first noted in Gen 17.1: "I am God Almighty; walk before me and be blameless" as spoken to Abraham.

1-Vs. 9: I, John, your brother, who share with you in Jesus the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

Here John's identification as brother (*adelphos*) with regard to his listeners comes after his lofty calling by an angel (cf. vs. 1). He enhances this identity by sharing (*sugkoinonos*; to have something in common with, *sug* or with + *koinonos*;"But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, a wild olive shoot, were grafted in their place to share the richness of the olive tree," Rom 11.17) the following:

-tribulation or *thlipsis*. "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death" [Mt 24.9].

-kingdom or *basileia*. "Teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom" Mt 9.35].

-patient endurance or *hupomone*. "May you be strengthened...for all endurance and patience with joy" [Col 1.11]. This word literally means a "remaining behind" and can connote obstinacy.

John is on Patmos for two divine reasons: the "word (*logos*) of God and the "testimony (*marturia*) of Jesus." This island was a penal colony in Roman times and implies exile and

imprisonment. The preposition *dia* (on account of) is used which also means “through,” “by means of which.” “For this is the testimony of God that he has borne witness to his Son” [1 Jn 5.9].

1-Vs. 10: I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet.

Two uses of the preposition *en* (in): “in the Spirit” and “on the Lord’s day.”

Egenomen or I was: In vs. 9 the same verb was used with regard to being on Patmos, a physical location; in the verse at hand, this verb is used with regard to being in the Spirit or *Pneuma*, a being-in an immaterial location as it were.

Lord’s day or *en te kuriake hemera*. The adjective *kuriakos* is derived from the noun *Kurios*, Lord and refers to Sunday. “When you meet together, it is not the Lord’s supper that you eat” [1 Cor 11.20].

Note the position of a voice behind (*opiso*) John. “Then the Spirit lifted me up and as the glory of the Lord arose from its place, I heard behind me the sound of a great earthquake” [Ezk 3.12]. Also, “Behold, there he stands behind our wall, gazing in at the windows, looking through the lattice” [Sg 2.9]. Such behind-ness intimates divine transcendence.

The preposition *opiso* is used in conjunction with a “loud voice” where the adjective *me-gas* primarily means great as in size or dimension. Such a voice is compared to a trumpet or *salpigx* which here connotes the immediate presence of the Last Day. *Salpigx* may be related to the Hebrew *sophar* as used with regard to Mt. Sinai: “And as the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him in thunder” [Ex 19.19].

1-Vs. 11: saying, “Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.”

The saying (*legouses*) agrees with *salpigx* of vs. 10 as though it were animate. Keeping in mind that the trumpet is behind John, this saying is directed through him, as it were, and then further towards his action of writing. Thus in sum:

(trumpet) saying→John→write→send (to seven churches)

The final command to send (*pempo*) is akin to Christ's sending of the Apostles though a different verb is used in the latter, usually associated with the impartation of a commission: "As the Father has sent (*apostello*) me, even so I send you" [Jn 20.21].

The preposition *eis* or into suggests a putting-fully into the book at hand; *biblos* is indefinite. While the contents of this book has a direct relationship to the "seven churches," the image here has John making an exact copy of his vision in this *biblos*; it is as though there were no temporal gap between the seeing of its contents and its sending without passing through the intermediary of his memory.

Compare "seven" with its use in vs. 4; churches and spirits. In the verse at hand sending has the preposition *eis* with regard to the seven churches; it may correspond with the putting-fully into the book where its contents are equivalent with that of the seven churches.

1-Vs. 12: Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands.

Epistrepho: literally, to turn upon (*epi-*) in the sense of looking back in order to see (*blepo*) as used in vs. 11. "You were straying like sheep but have now returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls" [1 Pt 2.25]. Contrast the use of *epistrepho* in the verse at hand with Moses who was prohibited to see God's face but only his back: "and you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen" [Ex 33.23].

A voice (*phone*) is invisible yet here is visible (*blepo*) and may be traced to the trumpet.

Epistrepho is used a second time with respect to "seven golden lampstands," this word being reminiscent of the menorah of Ex 25.31: "And you shall make a lampstand of Ex 25.31 designated for use in the tent (and later temple): "And you shall make a lampstand of pure gold." A Hebrew word for pure gold is *paz* as in Sg 5.11: "His head is the finest gold." *Paz* is to be distinguished from regular gold in that it solid.

1-Vs. 13: And in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden girdle round his breast.

En meso for in the midst in the sense of being at the center of these seven lampstands. Compare Ezk 1.4: "and in the midst of the fire as it were gleaming bronze."

The son of man (*huios anthropou*) is a title Jesus used of himself most likely in conjunction with Dan 7.13: "I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man." Also note that God called the prophet Ezekiel by this title as in Ezk 2.1. The son of man has two items of clothing:

1) long robe or *poderes*, literally, “reaching to the foot.” For this term used in the LXX, cf. Ezk 9.3: “and with them (men ready to slaughter the guilty) was a man clothed in linen, with a writing case at his side.” The Hebrew is *bad* (singular) which more specifically means thread as pertaining to linen garments as worn by the priests: “And you shall make for them linen breeches to cover their naked flesh” [Ex 28.42]. Compare *poderes/bad* with the long robe with sleeves or *ketoneth pasym*. The first word is a kind of tunic or inner garment used by both men and women; the second word (*pas*, singular) literally means extremity in that it reached to the hands and feet. For a parallel word, Cf. 1 Sam 2.19: “And his (Samuel) mother used to make for him a little robe and take it to him each year.” Here the term *mehyl* properly means an upper or exterior garment; it was special to the high priest (cf. Ex 28.31).

2) golden girdle or zone *chruse*. Contrast the other, humbler use of *zone* as used by John the Baptist: “Now John wore a garment of camel’s hair and a leather girdle around his waste” [Mt 3.4]. Such a zone was around the son of man’s breast (*mastos*). Note the same John having this vision as in Jn 13.23: “One of his disciples who Jesus loved was lying close to the breast of Jesus.” Here the word is *kolpos*, better, the (hollow) space between two breasts. In the verse at hand, the son of man is girded (*perizzonnumi*) with the zone, a verb used with respect to virtue: “Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth” [Eph 6.14].

1-Vs. 14: His head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow; his eyes were like a flame of fire.

Regarding head and hair: another reference from the Book of Daniel, notably 7.9: “his raiment was white as snow and the hair of his head like pure wool.” For precedents signifying the wisdom of old age: “You shall rise up before the hoary head and honor the face of an old man, and you shall fear your God” [Lev 19.32]. Also, “A hoary head is a crown of glory; it is gained in a righteous life” [Prov 16.31].

Parallel to this implied honor due to the son of man are his eyes: “flame of fire” (*phlox*) as in Lk 16.24: “Father Abraham...send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.” The threatening nature of *phlox* thus intimates the future judgment to be described in Revelation; it is one effected primarily by vision (eyes).

1-Vs. 15: his feet were like burnished bronze, refined as in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of many waters.

Attention now shifts from the son of man’s head to his feet: burnished bronze (*chalkolibanos*) as found in Dan 10.6: “His arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze

(*nechosheth*).” This term is also noted in 2.18 with respect to the church in Thyatira. Compare the gleam of this metal with that of the bronze altar of 1 Kg 8.64: “The bronze altar was too small to receive the burnt offering and the cereal offering and the fat pieces of the peace offerings.” Another related word pertains to the throne in Ezk 1.4: “and in the midst of the fire as it were gleaming bronze (*chashmal*).” Such bronze is refined (*puroo*), that is, by fire in a furnace (*kaminos*) which is used to smelter metals or baking bread. “And the smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln (*kivshan*; also used for smelting), and the whole mountain (Sinai) quaked greatly” [Ex 19.18].

The son of man’s voice (*phone*, cf. vs. 12 as well as 14.2 & 19.6) continues the theme of Mt. Sinai as just noted and finds echo in Ezk 1.24: “I heard the sound of their wings like the sound of many waters, like the thunder of the Almighty, a sound of tumult like the sound of a host.” Also, cf. Ps 104.7: “At the sound of your thunder they took to flight.” Both the Ezekiel and Psalm references have *qol* for sound, better, voice.

1-Vs. 16: in his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth issued a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.

Another reference with the number seven; for a precedent, cf. chapter six of Joshua where Israel marches around Jericho seven times as well as many other citations concerning this number. Keep in mind that the son of man is holding seven stars (i.e., possessing them) while standing in the midst of seven golden lampstands (vs. 12); perhaps the stars can represent a natural manifestation of these stands located in the temple. Cf. vs. 20 which explains their meaning.

Two-edged sword or *romphaia*, a large broad weapon as noted in Lk 2.35 with regard to the Virgin Mary: “And a sword will pierce through your own soul also that the thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed.” In addition to the *romphaia* being large and unwieldy, it is two-edged or *distomos*, i.e., sharp on both sides to cut this way and that. The two-edged nature of this sword as found in Heb 4.12: “The word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword (*machaira*).” This type of sword is a small type in comparison with the *romphaia*.

Son of man’s face (*opsis*: “’o not judge by appearances,’ Jn 7.24): resembled “full strength” of the sun or literally, “in its strength (*dunamis*).”

1-Vs. 17: When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand upon me saying, “Fear not, I am the first and the last.”

This verse continues into the next one. A natural response (*nekros*, dead) to divine manifestation; cf. Ex 3.6: “And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.” In the

verse at hand, note the importance of touch (*tithemi*, lay) which is followed by speaking. The words “fear not” (*phobeomai*) bring John back to life, as it were. “Take heart, it is I; have no fear” [Mk 6.50].

Such confidence is based upon the son of man claiming to be “first and last” or *protos* and *eschatos*. Here the precise nature of this beginning and end is not specified and is also mentioned in 2.8 and 22.13 where they are akin to Christ being the Alpha and Omega. Thus Christ is the first and last letter (implied are the letters in between) of the Greek alphabet, that is, Christ as *Logos* or Word of God. Cf. Is 44.6: “I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god.” The Hebrew words are *ri’shon* and *‘acharon*. With this in mind, before John beheld this vision it may be said that he had reason to fear because his focus of attention was external to the “alphabet” of Jesus Christ.

1-Vs. 18: and the living one; I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.

A continuation from vs. 17; by claiming to be the living one (*zon*) Christ is a “living alphabet.” Note use of present participle as opposed to the past and future tenses. The son of man spells out this *zon* by saying that he has died (clearly the past tense). His death sets the stage, as it were, for being alive (*zon* used again). The present participle implies continuation into the unending nature of “Christ-as-alphabet.” Forevermore: *eis tous aionas ton aionon*. The preposition *eis* (into) suggests continuous movement into the future. “To the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen” [Rom 16.27].

Possession of a key (*kleis*) signifies that Christ can let a person in or out from two places: death and Hades, the former being the act of dying (i.e., getting to Hades) and latter being the abode of those who have died (i.e., those who have arrived there). Compare with Mt 16.19: “I will give you (Peter) the keys of the kingdom of heaven.” In a sense, Peter’s possession of such keys is more important because the kingdom of heaven transcends death and Hades. The keys of vs. 18 and Peter may be seen in context of Chapter One or the seven churches, an extension of heaven’s kingdom.

1-Vs. 19: Now write what you see, what is and what is to take place hereafter.

Note the command to write (*grapho*) what John sees, namely, his act of inscribing follows closely Christ-as-alphabet (i.e., as *Logos*). John does not write what he hears nor anything coming from the other senses. “And we are writing this that our joy may be complete” [1 Jn 1.4]. In vs. 1 of the same letter John includes the sense of touch, *selaphao* implying groping or feeling as one would do to test the quality of a piece of fruit.

Seeing in vs. 19 contains two “is-es:” *ha eisin* (can apply to Christ as first and last, vs. 17) and that which will happen later; *mellei* or about to which signifies action soon to be effected. The hereafter (*meta tauta*) or those events in chapters 4-22.

1-Vs. 20: As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in my right hand, the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

A recapitulation of what John had seen; again note stress throughout Chapter One on the faculty of sight. Seven stars, golden lampstands and churches are perceived as one entity, as different expressions of the same mystery or *musterion*. This word is akin the *apokalupsis* or “revelation of Jesus Christ,” words which begin this bok. *Musterion* suggests invisibility and the need to be initiated in order to perceive its contents. For a passage using both terms: “Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret for long ages” [Rom 16.25]. Here the latter is in conjunction with disclosure (*phaneronthos*, vs. 26).

Chapter Two

2-Vs. 1: “To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: ‘The words of him who holds the seven stars in his hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands.

From here through 3.22 are the letters to the seven churches beginning with Ephesus. Note that John does not write directly to each church, rather, to its angel (*aggelos*, fundamentally as messenger). This angel in turn may be said to communicate the content of the letter to the particular church. Both John and each of the seven angels have a parallel role: the former makes know the *apokalupsis* as a whole whereas the latter do it in particular matters.

The first verse centers attention upon the implied son of man or Jesus Christ who has two characteristics (note the other characteristics with regard to the six other angels):

1) seven stars which he holds as in 1.16. Former has the verb *krateo* which connotes having power and the latter has the verb *echo*, simply to have. In the verse at hand, *krateo* suggests that the stars point to Christ’s lordship and that they are intended for something later on.

2) *en meso* or among as in 1.13, signifying in the midst of something. Here the seven golden lampstands demarcate, as it were, the space in which the son of man is walking; *peripateo* is the verb, present tense or continued walking more in the sense of walking about

(*peri-*). Note the identity between the lampstands, churches and Jesus Christ which are presented as one reality.

2-Vs. 2: “I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear evil men but have tested those who call themselves apostles but are not, and found them to be false.

Now the son of man speaks as having knowledge (*oida*, verb) which emanates from the above mentioned *peripateo* or walking about. Contrast his *peripateo* with Satan’s: “The Lord said to Satan, ‘Whence have you come?’ Satan answered the Lord, ‘From going to and fro on the earth and from walking up and down on it’ [Job 1.7]. The first verb is shut and second is *halak*; former implies a quick running up and down as well, rowing as well as lashing. It is as though Satan were on a boat wildly beating the sea with the flat part of an oar. The latter verb simply means to go.

Christ’s knowledge consists of five elements which may be outlined as follows:

-*ergon* can apply to any endeavor. “His servants in charge, each with his work” [Mk 13.34].

-*kopos* with regard to that which is specifically wearisome. “I am talking like a madman—with far greater labors” [2 Cor 11.23].

-*hupomone* with regard to steadfastness in suffering. “May you be strengthened...for all endurance and patience with joy” [Col 1.11].

-*bastazo* (to bear) as a load or burden, here with respect to evil men. “Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple” [Lk 14.27].

-*peirazo* (to test) persons claiming to be apostles. “This he said to test him” [Jn 6.6]. In the verse at hand, *peirazo* results in finding such persons to be false but the actual means of achieving this result is unspecified. Note that such men “are not,” that is, in the Hebrew sense of not having being which was present among them all along. Such not-ness comes to light by a process of finding them to be false or *pseudos* which implies lying.

2-Vs. 3: I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name’s sake, and you have not grown weary.

The son of man’s knowing (*oida*) extends from the last verse into this one which lacks the words “I know” in the Greek text. Note another mention of *hupomene* and *bastazo*, the latter with respect to Christ’s name (*onoma*) which has its roots in the Hebrew *shem* or divine manifestation. “This is my name (i.e., *YHWH*) forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations” [Ex 3.15].

Kopiao for to grow weary; verbal root for the noun *kopos* in vs. 3 (toil).

2-Vs. 4: But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.

Kata sou for against you in the sense of being at odds with the church of Ephesus. “Was it not the Lord against whom we have sinned” [Is 42.24]? The reason Christ taking this stance: that this particular church has abandoned (*aphiemi*: “That the husband should not divorce his wife,” 1 Cor 7.11) its love or *agape*. This term is well known in the New Testament. “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” [Jn 13.35]. In the verse under discussion, the noun *agape* was once present but is now no longer. The adjective *protos* is used (at first); it better translates as “first *agape*.”

2-Vs. 5: Remember then from what you have fallen, repent and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place unless you repent.

A close connection between remembering and repentance (*mnemoneuo* and *metanoeo*, verb). The faculty of memory played a crucial role among ancient cultures, and here it perhaps is colored by the Platonic concept of recalling one’s original nature which had fallen (*pipto*). *Pothen* (from what, where) designates a specific place from which one has departed. The verb *mnemoneuo* should be taken in conjunction with *agape* of the previous verse which connotes a specifically Christian “departure” as opposed to a Platonic one. Although *pipto* clearly refers to a descent and can be associated with the banishment of Adam and Eve from Eden, Gen 3.24 has a “horizontal” form of banishment: “Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken.”

The verse at hand states that once the church of Ephesus remembers its *pothen*...specific place...it naturally leads to *metanoia*, a theme associated with John the Baptist. “Bear fruits that befit repentance” [Lk 3.8]. *Metanoia* thus is an actualisation of memory; the preposition *meta-* or after prefaced to the *noun* nous or mind...that which is after the mind, if you will which is indicative of a change of one’s attitude. Intimately connected with *metanoia* is the accomplishment of deeds done at first or in Greek “first (*protos*) deeds.” Here doing is third in line after remembering, that is, preceded by *metanoia*.

The second sentence of vs. 5 contains a threat that the son of man will come (*erchomai*) to the church of Ephesus. A parallel may be drawn between such coming which connotes a *pothen* or place-from-which as in the first sentence. It has as a destination the removal of Ephesus’ lampstand (*kineo*), a verb which fundamentally means to shake, that is, as if to shake the lampstand away from the church. More specifically, we have the shaking of the lampstand from its place (*topos*) which is the mirror image of one of those golden lampstands in vs. 1. Stability (i.e., lack of movement) of this lampstand depends upon *metanoia*, an act of movement.

2-Vs. 6: Yet this you have, you hate the works of the Nicolaitans which I also hate.

Nicolaitans: a sect that taught that Christians could eat food offered to idols and to practice immorality (cf. vs. 14). The son of man has a positive statement regarding the church at Ephesus, namely, that it hates (*miseo*) idolatry connected with immoral behavior. “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other” [Mt 6.24]. Note the mirror image of hatred vis-a-vis the son of man and church of Ephesus which counters the lampstand image mentioned in vs. 5.

2-Vs. 7: He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the paradise of God.

The concluding verse with regard to the church of Ephesus, reminiscent of the prophets and of Prov 1.8: “Hear, my son, your father’s instruction.” Here is a connection between listening and the Spirit’s (*Pneuma*) speaking to the churches, that is, not just that of Ephesus but the six other implied churches. Common to all seven is eating of the tree of life, the opposite of idol worship proper to the just mentioned Nicolaitans. Be aware of the clear reference to Gen 2.9: “The tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” Also cf. Rev 22.2, “on either side of the river, the tree of life.” Note this tree’s location, *betok* or in the midst or the garden’s center. Compare this *betok* with *en meso* of 1.13: “in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man.”

To eat of the tree of life means that one is present at the garden’s center which in vs. 7 is the “paradise of God,” *paradeisos* again suggesting Gen 2.9. “Truly I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise” [Lk 23.43], a statement by Christ on the tree of life.

2-Vs. 8: “And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: “The words of the first and the last, who died and came to life.

Attention now moves from the church of Ephesus to that in Smyrna with the same opening phrase, “to the angel” (as opposed to Smyrna directly). Here we also have words or in Greek, “these (*tade*, also as in 2.1) says.” The son of man’s identity shifts from his holding seven stars and walking among seven golden lampstands to him as *protos* and *eschatos* (cf. 1.17). This beginning and end has its complement in death and life; note that the adjective *nekros* (dead) is used. Also contained here is a temporal *protos* and *eschatos* as well as its inverse, dead and then coming to life. Implied is Christ’s temporal life span and his intemporal life span stretching from death to (eternal) life.

2-Vs. 9: “I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

Another use of the verb *oida* (I know) as used with the church of Ephesus above which here refers to three difficulties: tribulation, poverty and slander (*thlipsis*, *ptocheia* and *blasphemia*; note blasphemy, usually used in reference to God). All result from the “synagogue of Satan” (cf. 3.9). Note the identity of Satan and synagogue which implies that this Jewish place of worship is in Satan’s hands. Also contrast synagogue with church (*ekklesia*) or the seven Christian assemblies. Despite this, the son of man says that the church of Smyrna is rich (*plousios*), a term referring to either material or spiritual wealth. “But God who is rich in mercy” [Eph 2.4]. The verse at hand does not specify which type of richness Smyrna possesses, most likely the immaterial kind.

2-Vs. 10: Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.

A warning about immanent persecution, *pascho* (the verb to suffer is used here). “So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood” [Heb 13.12]. The son of man associates *pascho* with imprisonment of a few church members by the devil (*diabolos*) or the just mentioned Satan; implication is that such affliction will come from the Jews (cf. synagogue of vs. 9). Here *pascho* takes on the more specific form of tribulation or *thlipsis*, cf. vs. 9. The period of ten days may not refer to a definite period of time but a lengthy period. “Test your servants for ten days” [Dan 1.12]. Such tribulation occurs in prison or *phulake*: “the mystery of Christ, on account of which I (Paul) am in prison” [Col 4.2]. Here the verb *deo* is used. *Phulake* also means a watch, especially during the night: “He would have watched and would not have let his house be broken into” [Mt 24.43].

Being faithful (i.e., to be *pistos*) during imprisonment—following the example of Daniel just mentioned—results in a “crown of life” (*stephanos*), this term usually signifying kingship; it can also negatively allude to pride (cf. Is 28.1). For a positive sense: “Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness” [2 Tm 4.8]. Another reference to *stephanos*-as-life: “Blessed is the man who endure trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life” [Jms 1.12]. In this case the person who receives the crown of life is blessed (*makarios*), a term used in conjunction with the beatitudes. For reference with regard to *makarios* and *ashry* see 1.3.

2-Vs. 11: He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who conquers shall not be hurt by the second death.”

Words similar to 2.7 where mention was made of the “tree of life;” note the singular “ear” and plural “churches.” In the verse at hand, hearing is related to the “second death”

(*deuteros*) or final condemnation of sinners. “Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire” [20.14]. Perhaps those who have an ear and listen may be thrown into this burning lake along with everyone else but will not suffer. “And they walked about in the midst of the flames, singing hymns to God and blessing the Lord” [Song of the Three Young Men, Apocrypha, 1.1, inserted between Dan 3.23 & 3.24]. Such is one meaning of to conquer (*nikao*) as in 2.7. *Nikao* is used often in Revelation and is integral to an understanding of this book: 2.17, 26, 3.5, 12, 21, 5.5, 6.2, 12.11, 15.2, 17.14, 21.7. To be hurt or *adikeo* can also mean acting as a criminal: “If then I am a wrongdoer” [Acts 25.11, verb used].

2-Vs. 12: “And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: ‘The words of him who has the sharp two-edge sword.’

Another mention of *romphaia* (cf 1.16), a large type of weapon. *Distomos* is the adjective used to describe this sword, i.e., two-edged , again as in 1.16.

2-Vs. 13: “I know where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is; you hold fast my name and you did not deny my faith even in the days of Antipas my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you where Satan dwells.

Keep in mind that as with the other churches already mentioned these words are addressed to the angel of this particular congregation. Not only is the church of Pergamum identified with Satan but more specifically, the place of his rule signified by throne or *thronos*, a term which signifies judgment as well as political dominion. On the other hand, Pergamum (a noted center for idolatrous worship) has some faithful followers of Christ who are included in these words. To hold fast or *krateo* here implies possessiveness, another example being Heb 4.14: “Let us hold fast our confession.” In the verse at hand, *krateo* pertains to the divine name, more specifically *Christos* or anointed one as confessed by Peter: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” [Mt 16.16]. Vs. 13 situates this *krateo* in a specific time, “days of Antipas,” who is equated with being God’s *martus* (cf. *marturia*) and *pistos*; note personal pronoun “my” which indicates a special relationship in the context of this verse which mentions the name of Satan.

Antipas was killed “among (*para*) you,” a preposition signifying here the presence of some members of the Pergamum community. Parallel this among-ness with regard to the accusers of Stephen: “And they came upon him and seized him and brought him before the council” [Acts 6.12]. The Greek preposition is *eis* (into) in the sense of being fully within. Perhaps John had in mind this council “where Satan dwells;” the verb *katoikeo* signifying permanent residence. The preposition *kata-* prefaced to the verb indicates this, in accord with. “Then he (unclean spirit) goes and brings with him seven other spirits more evil than himself, and they enter and dwell there” [Mt 12.45].

2-Vs. 14: But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice immorality.

Few things: *oliga* connotes smallness in size. Here it refers to Balaam's teaching which swayed Israel to abandon *YHWH* in favor of idolatry. "Behold, these caused the people of Israel, by the counsel of Balaam, to act treacherously against the Lord in the matter of Peor, and so the plague came among the congregation of the Lord" [Num 31.16]. Such idolatry is viewed as a stumbling block (*skandalon*, occasion for sin): "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone that will make men stumble, a rock that will make them fall" [Rom 9.33, quoting Is 28.16 & 8.14-15]. It assumes a two-fold guise: eating food sacrificed to idols (*eidolothuton*) and immorality (*porneuo*, more specifically, to act like a prostitute).

The verse at hand situates this *oliga* within the larger context of "sons of Israel" or the *qahal*, the nation as a whole. This is brought out by the Num 31.16 verse which deals with Israel's corporate nature. The complaint mentioned in this letter to the church (the New Testament *qahal* or *ekklesia*) is not pervasive but enough to threaten that church's existence. Note use of *ekei* or there, a more specific localization of idolatry in the church of Pergamum.

2-Vs. 16: Repent then. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth.

Vs. 15 mentioned the Nicolaitans (cf. 2.6), almost in the same breath as idolatry in the preceding verse and as if to equate this faction with it. The verse at hand presents another exhortation to repent as noted in 2.5, the verb being *metanoeo*; here it is associated with the adverb then, *oun*. Implied is that certain persons among the church of Pergamum are guilty of idolatry and are thus addressed. A two-fold threat awaits for failing to engage in *metanoia*:

1) The son of man's coming soon (*tachu*) in the sense of doing it quickly and without hesitation.

2) Making war (*polemeo*), more specifically, with the "sword of my mouth," *romphaia* being the word, that large two-edged weapon as in vs. 12. Here *romphaia* is equated with a tongue, that is, the *Logos* speaking words (*logoi*) instead of wielding this sword as a conventional weapon.

2-Vs. 17: He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone with a new name written on the stone which no one knows except him who receives it."

The concluding words addressed to the angel of the church of Pergamum begun in 2.12. The first sentence contains the same exhortation to listen used with the earlier churches, namely, to hear the Spirit speaking not so much to the congregation of Pergamum but to the churches as a whole. Furthermore, this hearing depends upon a “having,” that is, a having of ears in the sense of possessing them. Implied is that there are people in the churches who do not “have” ears and are therefore deaf. “But they refused to hearken and turned a stubborn shoulder and stopped their ears that they might not hear” [Zech 7.11]. Note that such speaking in vs. 17 comes right after vs. 16's “*romphaia-as-logos* of my mouth.”

Also implied in this hearing by certain members of the church is conquering or *nikao*. The object of such triumph is not especially clear; it is in the present tense—that is, occurring in the here and now—suggesting that *nikao* is concomitant with having (an ear) and hearing.

Two consequences of *nikao*:

1) Possession (verb is in the future tense) of “hidden manna,” better, some (*tou*) of it. The passive participle of *krupto* is used here. Reference may be to heavenly food in contrast to the unclean food associated with Balaam (cf. 2.14). “He rained down upon them manna to eat and gave them the grain of heaven” [Ps 78.24]. Note that this verse is quoted in Jn 6.31: “Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’” Jesus continues this by identifying himself as this bread, vs. 33. Here emphasis is upon the downward motion of Christ from heaven to earth.

2) The other consequence of *nikao*: “white stone” (*psephos*), white being symbolic of joy and victory. Note its connection with the hidden manna, i.e., that which is not yet revealed. *Psephos* often refers to a means of tabulating a vote, of counting. “But when they were put to death I cast my vote against them” [Acts 26.10]. Not only is this stone white but has a “new name” (*onoma*) as paralleled by Is 65.15: “But his servants he will call by a different name.” In the verse at hand there is a close identity between this white stone, the new name and the person who receives it. Contrast this with the mark of the beast which enabled people to purchase goods: “No one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name” [Rev 13.17].

2-Vs. 18: “And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: ‘The words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze.’

The fourth letter; note the connection between all seven letters by the conjunction *kai* (and) which begins the sentence and signifies the close relationship between all seven churches. Here we have for the first time the proper title “the Son of God” (*ho huios tou theou*) as

pertaining to Jesus Christ. Thyatira was a well known commercial center renowned for its idolatrous feasts.

Vs. 18 is similar to Dan 10.6: “His body was like beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and the sound of his words like the noise of a multitude.”

Two features of the Son of God:

1) eyes as “flame of fire” (*phlox*). “Send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in anguish in this flame” [Lk 16.24].

2) feet resemble burnished bronze (*chalkolibanos*), that is, where the Song of God walks; cf. 1.15. Thus there is a parallel between what he sees (as flame) and where he treads (as burnished bronze).

2-Vs. 19: “I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first.

A positive statement before offering a criticism. Here is a close identity between five qualities, all which are the object of divine knowing (*eido*): works, love, faith, service, patient endurance and latter works (*ergon, agape, pistis, diakonia, hupomone* and *ta erga eschata*). Note the difference between *ergon* and *diakonia*: the former is more generic (“But he who does what is true comes to the light that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been wrought in God,” Jn 3.21), whereas the latter is more specific in the sense of ministry (“Will not the dispensation of the Spirit be attended with greater splendor?,” 2 Cor 3.7).

In light of the distinction between *ergon* and *diakonia*, vs. 19 has the former term which is distinguished according to a temporal order, latter (*ta eschata*) and first (*ton proton*).

2-Vs. 20: But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and beguiling my servants to practice immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols.

Here begins the complaint against the church of Thyatira which continues through vs. 24. Jezebel is a symbolic name perhaps referring to the Nicolaitians. “What peace can there be, so long as the harlotries and the sorceries of your mother Jezebel are so many” [2 Kg 9.22]?

Similar to the historical Jezebel, the one identified with the church of Thyatira is engaged in four harmful actions against the other church members:

1) teaching (*didasko*; opposite to the New Testament function of this word which is equivalent to a rabbi)

2) beguiling (*planao*: “Beware lest you be carried away with the error of lawless men,” 2 Pt 3.17)

3) practice immorality (*porneuo*, as in 2.14)

4) eat food sacrificed to idols (*eidolothuton*, again as in 2.14). This activity is directed against the Son of God’s servants (*doulos*, singular).

The fate of such a Jezebel is as follows: “In the territory of Jezreel the dogs shall eat the flesh of Jezebel; and the corpse of Jezebel shall be as dung upon the face of the field” [2 Kg 9.36-7]. Compare with the great harlot of Rev 17.1-6.

2-Vs. 21: I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her immorality.

I.e., the Son of God gave Jezebel *chronos* for *metanoia* (verb used here, *metanoeo*). Such *chronos* is temporal duration as distinguished from *kairos*, a divine event transcending space and time. Here *metanoeo* is more poignant due to Jezebel’s refusal or failure not to wish (*thelo*) it. Note the further use of *porneia*, the verb being used in vs. 20; the preposition *ek* (from) heightens this refusal.

2-Vs. 22: Behold, I will throw her on a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation unless they repent of her doings.

More words spoken against Jezebel; the term *kline* for sickbed can refer to an ordinary bed or a couch on which to recline for meals. “I tell you, in that night there will be two men in one bed; one will be taken and the other left” [Lk 17.34]. In the verse at hand, Jezebel is thrown on this sickbed (*ballo*), not placed or asked to go upon it. Note *that* *ballo* in the Greek is implied with those persons who commit adultery with her (*moicheuo*). “...everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart” [Mt 5.28]. The second object of *ballo* in vs. 22 can mean that adultery was practiced with Jezebel on the sickbed which is equivalent to “great tribulation,” *thlipsis*. Compare this phrase with the same one in 7.14: “These are they who have come out of the great tribulation.”

Metanoeo (repent) is the option available to escape being thrown, *ballo*. Observe the use of *ek* (from), connoting almost a physical withdrawal of Jezebel’s doings (*ergos*, singular).

2-Vs. 23: And I will strike her children dead. And all the churches shall know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you as your works deserve.

Reference to the followers of Jezebel; the Greek puts it in a forceful way: “I will kill in death (*en thanato*). This is not done for the mere sake of expelling trouble makers from the church of Thyatira but for teaching the other churches about the Son of God, more specifically, that he searches (*ereunao*) mind and heart (*nephros* and *kardia*), both terms being singular. Such searching is the object of churches’ knowing (future tense). A verse reminiscent of Ps 139.1: “O Lord, you have searched me and known me!” The Hebrew verb is *chaqar* which implies a sense of exploring something new and unfamiliar. *Nephros* literally means kidney, the inmost thoughts and purposes of the soul; *kardia* is both the physical heart as well as center of spiritual life. Cf. Jer 17.10 for a use of both terms: “I the Lord search the mind and try the heart.” The same verb *chaqar* is used here; the Hebrew terms respectively are *lev* and *kelayoth*.

As a result of divine *chaqar* in vs. 23, the Son of God will reward each person according to his or her works (*ergos*, singular). Note the preposition *kata* (according), signifying direct proportion between *ergos* and the act of giving.

2-Vs. 24: But to the rest of you in Thyatira who do not hold this teaching, who have learned what some call the deep things of Satan, to you I say, I do not lay upon you any other burden.

The rest (*loipos*, singular) are distinguished from the churches in vs. 23; the teaching or *didache* implies the divine *chaqar* or searching or being the object of discovery by God. Such persons are familiar (*ginosko*, verb) with the *bathus* of Satan, referring to the Nicolaitans, a play on 1 Cor 2.10: “For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.” Here is another use of *ereunao*; the persons in mind (vs. 24) apply this searching or discovery to Satan. Since Satan traditionally lived under the earth, perhaps use of *bathus* in the literal sense of something very deep is suggested. For a parallel verse, cf. Ezk 6.13: “under every green tree, and under every leafy oak, wherever they offered pleasing odor to all their idols,” that is, these hidden places are a type of “deep things.”

Vs. 24 concludes with a positive note, that is, those who have learned the deep things of Satan are not condemned outrightly but bidden not to inflict persons with “other burdens” (*baros*). Implied is that they already have the *baros* of putting up with church members involved with the Nicolaitans; this term compares with *bathos*. Compare with Acts 15.28: “For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things.”

2-Vs. 25: only hold fast what you have until I come.

A short sentence concluding the larger one begun in the previous verse. That which the “rest” in Thyatira have is not explicit, most likely correct, orthodox teaching about Jesus Christ in contrast to the Nicolaitans. Such persons already have it (*echo*). There is a direct

correspondence here between holding fast (*krateo*), having and the future coming of the Son of Man (cf. Rev 3.11 for a similar verse). Thus *krateo* equals realization of Christ's presence whether it be in the future or the present.

2-Vs. 26: He who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, I will give him power over the nations.

Reference is to the person (singular) who has not followed Jezebel and therefore the Nicolaitans. Such a one both conquers and keeps (*nikao* and *tereo*); the former spills over to the second, that is, keeping with regard to the Son of God's works (*ergos*, singular). Both verbs are present participles indicating continuous duration or continuous conquering and keeping. *Tereo* in the Hebrew is equivalent to observing the divine *Torah*; for example, several words of keeping are found in Ps 119 which celebrates the *Torah*. "You have commanded your precepts to be kept diligently" [vs. 4]; the common verb is *shamar* in the sense of protecting a treasure from plunder. An amplified version of *tereo* is *suntereo* (*sun-* or *with*): "But Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart" [Lk 2.19]. This temporal extension continues "until the end" (*telos*), a term which can refer to the Son of Man being Omega or the last letter in the Greek alphabet as in Rev 1.8.

A recompense for *nikao* and *tereo*: temporal dominion (*exousia*), a term which connotes physical and mental power as well as the liberty of doing as one pleases; the latter definition is as follows: "Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ" [1Cor 9.12]. For the sense connoted in the verse at hand: "But that you may know that the Song of man has authority on earth to forgive sins" [Mt 9.6]. Nation or *ethnos* (singular) can apply to the Hebrew *goyim*, those peoples not belonging to the divine heritage of Israel.

2-Vs. 27: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received power from my Father.

A verse reminiscent of Ps 2.8-9: "Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage and the ends of the earth your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." In the verse at hand, "them" refers to the enthoi of vs. 26 over which the Son of God will rule or *poimaino*; this term refers more to nourishing, of finding pasture: "Tend my sheep" [Jn 21.17]. Vs. 27 contrasts this gentle exercise of authority with a "rod of iron" (*rabdos*) which corresponds directly with the Hebrew *shevet* of Ps 2.9 as well as Ps 23.4: "Your rod and your staff, they comfort me." This *rabdos* can be used for shattering earthen pots (*keramikos*, singular); the image is of someone walking along and smashing them (for example, the nations) at will or at random.

The final words refer to Christ's power from his Father; the English "power" is missing in the Greek text. The preposition from or *para* connotes the Father as source; it is used frequently in Jn 13-17 when Christ speaks of his relationship with the Father. Cf. references to *para* elsewhere on this Lectio Divina Home Page.

2-Vs. 28: and I will give him the morning star.

Proinos: one of two New Testament uses of this word whose meaning is unclear; both occur in Revelation, the second being 22.16: "I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright morning star." This second reference occurs at the end of Revelation. Note that vs.28 has the Son of God giving (future tense) the person who holds out this *proinos*. That is to say, the *proinos* mentioned at Revelation's beginning achieves full radiance at its conclusion. Cf. the heavenly Jerusalem's brightness: "having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like as jasper, clear as crystal" [21.11].

Vs. 29 concludes with the same words regarding the necessity of hearing or listening to the Spirit as he speaks to the seven churches. Presumably these words do not apply to the person who has received the *proinos*.

Chapter Three

3-Vs. 1: "And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: 'The words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. 'I know your works; you have the name of being alive, and you are dead.

The fifth letter to the church of Sardis. As is the case with all seven churches, these words are addressed to angel of this particular church. Sardis was known for its licentiousness. Here Christ (not mentioned specifically) has the "seven spirits of God" (*pneuma*, singular; cf. 1.4 & 16). In addition to these spirits he has "seven stars" as in 2.1 (*astron*, singular).

As with regard to other church, Christ knows (*oida*) the works of Sardis. Such knowledge is bound up with possession of seven spirits and seven stars, a heavenly type of knowledge as it pertains to human affairs. Sardis possesses a name (*onoma*, equivalent to the Hebrew *shem*), that is, as understood by people as being alive, *zao*. In light of divine *oida*, Sardis is dead (*nekros*). Note the use of the adjective as opposed to the verbal form of *zao*, a fact which makes the contrast between these two states more striking. The adjective suggests something (death) which has already taken root.

3-Vs. 2: Awake, and strengthen what remains and is on the point of death, for I have not found your works perfect in the sight of my God.

Note the connection between the *nekros* of vs. 1 and the divine command to awake, *gregoreo*. This verb is a key one in several parables of Jesus Christ with the specific meaning of watching (in the sense of staying awake from sleep), for example, Mt 24.43: “Watch therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.” This command takes place towards the end of Jesus’ preaching. The parable is followed by another (foolish and wise maidens): “Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour” [25.14]. In both instances *gregoreo* is yoked with a lack of knowledge regarding divine events.

In addition to the injunction to keep awake, vs. 2 adds another, strengthen (*sterizo*) which connotes the establishment of something. “When the days drew near for him to be received up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem” [Lk 9.51]. An Old Testament precedent: “I will set my face against that man...and cut him off from the midst of my people” [Ezk 14.8]. In the verse at hand, *sterizo* is in relation to “what remains” (*loipos*, singular), presumably, faith in God. The diminution of a previous condition has reached such a low point that it is nearly dead (*apothanein*); this death is immanent as indicated by *mello*, imperfect active indicative.

Through his divine scrutiny of the church of Sardis, Christ did not find this community’s works (*ergos*, singular) perfect (*pleroo*). The verb *pleroo* signifies completion, of something which has been done thoroughly. “That you may stand mature and fully assured in the will of God” [Col 4.12]. Most likely the church of Sardis began auspiciously enough but did not see their intentions carried through. Such *pleroo* is perceived “in the sight of my God” (*enopion*). “Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend” [Ex 33.11]. Here the Septuagint uses *enopion* for the Hebrew *panym* ‘*el-panym*. In the verse at hand, note the personal pronoun, “my God,” which more intensely contrasts the misdeeds of Sardis with the divine presence.

3-Vs. 3: Remember then what you received and heard; keep that and repent. If you will not awake, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come upon you.

Such remembering (*mnemoneuo*) is akin to the exhortation to be awake in the previous verse, as though sleeping were equivalent with a lack of memory. This verse is in relationship with what the church of Sardis has received and heard; note the order, first receiving and then hearing. Most likely reference is to the Gospel which was received in the person of early disciples whose teaching about Christ the church of Sardis then heard. Compare this sequence of receiving and hearing with 1 Jn 1.2: “The life was made manifest, and we saw it and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father.” Here the chain of words which delineate the essential Christian Gospel runs as follows: manifest, saw, testify and proclaim (*phaneroo*, *horao*, *martureo* and *apaggello*).

Vs. 3 says with regard to the sequence of having received and heard that it must be kept, *tereo*; cf. 1.3 for a discussion of this word. Here *tereo* is bound up with repentance (*metanoeo*, verb); keep in mind that *metanoeo* has its roots in the exhortation to remember the sequence of receiving and hearing.

Another instance of *gregoreo* or awake as in the previous verse, only used as a threat which reveals the importance of being vigilant. Compare Christ as a thief (*kleptes*) as in Mt 24.42 which also contains the *gregoreo*: “But know this, that if the householder had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have watched and would not have let his house be broken into.” The Book of Apocalypse is about the coming of Christ in glory, an event which will be evident to everyone. Here (vs. 3) as in the Gospel parable this coming is not fully realized but can be detected by vigilance. Thus the image of a watchman as herald is implied; his task is solitary and isolated but essential to the city’s survival.

Note “upon you,” *epi* being the preposition used, suggestive of Christ’s coming from above. It can be seen as a portent of the heavenly city’s descent (cf. 21.2).

3-Vs. 4: Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not soiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy.

Name (*onoma*, singular) is used instead of persons which signifies something greater than an individual. Contrast with 17.8: “and the dwellers on earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from foundation of the world.” At the end of the previous section (vs. 3) was noted the preposition *epi* as signifying Christ’s coming. Here dwellers are on (*epi*) the earth, that is, firmly rooted upon it and not inclined to receive the *epi* of Christ’s coming.

The names in Sardis or those who have kept their garments (*himation*, singular) clean; the verb here is *molunao*: “and their conscience, being weak, is defiled” [1 Cor 8.7]. *Molunao* indicates a staining; contrast with the fundamental meaning of *baptizo* (to baptize) which is a thorough immersion and the fundamental rite of Christian initiation. This notion of *baptizo* is reinforced by the use of *onoma*, for at baptism a Christian receives his or her name.

Peripateo: to walk, better, to walk about (*peri*-, around) in the sense of frequenting a place. For an opposite sense: “Many of his disciples drew back and no longer went about with him” [Jn 6.66]. Such walking is in white (*leukos*, singular), that is, the color of their garments, a common symbol of purity heightened by the immorality prevalent in Sardis. Similarly, the adjective worthy (*axios*) may be said to have the color of white.

3-Vs. 5: He who conquers shall be clad thus in white garments, and I will not blot his name out of the book of life; I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels.

The garments mentioned in the previous verse are specified as a kind of reward or victory (to conquer, *nikao*); for the first mention of this word which is an important one in Revelation, cf. 2.7 where it is in conjunction with the “tree of life.” When Adam and Eve were banished from Eden, the location of this tree, God clothed them in “garments of skins” [Gen 3.21]. The “white garments” signify first abandonment of these other garments as well as restoration; better, transformation of Eden into the heavenly Jerusalem. In the verse at hand, the conquering person will be clad, *periballo*, that is, the white garments will be flung around him or her. This verb is in contrast with the Hebrew *lavash* of Genesis.

A parallel between the tree of life is intimated by mention of the “book of life;” the person being thus transformed will not have his *onoma* blotted out, *exaleipho* (*ex-*, from). “I, I am He who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins” [Is 43.25]. As for the “book of life,” cf. Ex 24.7: “Then he (Moses) took the book of the covenant and read it in the hearing of the people.”

Christ is presented as confessing (*homologeō*) the conquering person’s *onoma*, the complementary gesture of a person with respect to Christ’s name as in Rom 10.9: “If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord...you will be saved.” For a passage in line with vs. 5 with a fuller meaning and which incorporates the two ways of Christ to people and people to Christ: “Everyone who acknowledges me before men I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven” [Mt 10.32]. The verse at hand has the preposition *enopion* (*en-* or *in;* before, cf. 3.2); the verse from Matthew has the preposition *emprosthen* whose incorporation of another preposition (*pros*) suggests in-the-direction-towards.

The next verse (6) makes more sense in light of this *enopion/emprosthen* comparison with respect to listening to the Holy Spirit.

3-Vs. 7: “And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: ‘The words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one shall shut, who shuts and no one opens.’”

Philadelphia, a small town which had been weak in its faith (cf. vs. 8). This verse is a quote from Is 22.22. In the verse at hand, Christ is presented as the one who is both *hagios* and *alethinos*, two chief characteristics of the divinity found throughout the Old Testament. In his possession is the “key of David” (*kleis*), that is, lordship over Israel. Compare with the Isaiah source which has this key “on his shoulder,” perhaps signifying that it is very large. Although Christ “has” this key, he is nevertheless the key in the sense of having sprung from David’s lineage as depicted in Matthew’s Gospel.

The act of opening (what is opened is not denoted, *anoigo*) can refer to Christ himself being a door: “I am the door of the sheep” [Jn 10.7]. *Anoigo* bears a certain relation to the Book of Revelation, of *apokalupsis*, which no one can shut (*kleio*; note this word’s relationship with key, *kleis*). “If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture” [Jn 10.9].

3-Vs. 8: “I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door which no one is able to shut; I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.

For the relationship between divine knowing and works, cf. 2.2. Vs. 8 continues the theme of that special type of opening (*anoigo*) which is a special invitation to the Philadelphia church for encouragement in her weakness. Note that *thura* for door is the same term used in Jn 10.7 above. Perhaps the “little power” (*dunamis*) refers to faith, the ability to “go in and out” with respect to Christ-as-door.

Despite the weakness of the Philadelphian church, it nevertheless remained faithful as demonstrated by having kept (*tereo*, cf. 3.3) the logos of The Logos. Such keeping is synonymous with not denying (*arneomai*) Christ’s name which means Anointed.

3-Vs. 9: Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet and learn that I have loved you.

Idou or behold is intended to grab one’s attention in preparation for an important utterance. “Synagogue of Satan” was used in conjunction with the church of Smyrna (2.9); as there, contrast the Jewish synagogue or qahal with the Christian *ekklesia* or church. Most likely these words pertain to certain leaders, not especially the Jews as a whole. “Beware of the scribes...who have the best seats in the synagogues” [Mk 12.38-9].

Vs. 9 alludes to their acknowledgment of Christ by having such Jews bow down (*proskuneo*, *pros-* or towards-which) to the church members at Philadelphia. “The hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father” [Jn 4.21]. Such worship has as its object the realization or learning (*gnosis*) of divine *agape* for the church of Philadelphia.

3-Vs. 10: Because you have kept my word of patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial which is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell upon the earth.

The *gnosis* and *agape* of vs. 10 achieve consummation in the act of keeping (*tereo*) Christ's *logos*, that is, the *logos* belonging to the *Logos* which is a reciprocal gesture. This *logos* is more specific as patient endurance or *hupomone* (cf. 2.19 regarding the church of Thyatira). *Tereo* is with respect to the "hour of trial" (*hora*), reminiscent of Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane: "Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners" [Mt 26.45]. In both instances, *hora* involves the confluence of two types of time, *kairos* (divine intervention) and chronological (*kronos*).

The temptation or *peirasmos* is not localized but destined to affect the "whole world" (*oikoumene*), a term signifying the inhabited world as opposed to the *kosmos* or physical creation. Note that *kosmos* is used when Christ commissions his disciples to preach the Gospel, implying that they will preach it to creation in its entirety. The "inhabited" notion of *oikoumene* is reinforced by "those who dwell upon the earth," *katoikeo* being part of the verbal root to *oikoumene*. The preposition *kata* (according in the sense of belonging to) implies people who have become rooted according to the ways of the world (cf. remarks under vs 4).

3-Vs. 11: I am coming soon; hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown.

For *tachu* (fast), cf. 2.16 which there is in conjunction with repentance; here it is with Christ's coming which is in response to the church of Philadelphia's loyalty despite her weakness. *Krateo* for hold fast as in 2.25; in vs. 11 it suggests the real though weak faith in Christ. Note the similarities between *krateo* and *tereo* (to keep), this latter verb having been mentioned numerous times thus far. *Krateo* may apply to keeping "your crown" (*stephanos*) as in 2.10; note that the Philadelphian church already possessed this crown and is bidden to *krateo* and *tereo* it against people wishing to seize (*lambano*) it.

3-Vs. 12: He who conquers I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God; never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem which comes down from God out of heaven, and my own new name.

Another reference to a person who conquers (*nikao*), here resulting in a pillar or *stulos*, the New Testament equivalent for *hamud* as in Ex 13.22 with its twofold nature of cloud and fire which implies constant visibility: "The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night did not depart from before the people." Vs. 12 locates the *stulos* in the divine temple, rather, "of my God" which personalizes this temple or *naos*; there are two other references to "my God" in this one verse. Note that the person-as-*naos* foreshadows the descent of the heavenly Jerusalem which lacks a temple (cf. 21.22).

Once within the temple as a pillar, a person will not require going in and out because he, like the heavenly Jerusalem just mentioned, will be the temple itself. This was foreshadowed

by the prophetess Anna: “She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day” [Lk 2.37]. The verse at hand also presages fulfillment of Christ-as-gate in Jn 10.7 where there will no longer be need to exit and enter. Also note: “Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you” [1 Cor 3.16]?

Onoma or name which can refer to the divine *YHWH*. “This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations” [Ex 3.15]. Right after mention of this name comes (presumably) the name of the “new Jerusalem.” Here the city comes down (present tense), whereas 21.2 has it descending. Thus the verse at hand shows a relationship between the divine name and this new Jerusalem. Vs. 12 concludes by speaking of “my own new name,” that is, Jesus Christ. Cf. the last verse of Ezekiel (48.35): “And the name of the city henceforth shall be the Lord is there.”

Vs. 13 has the familiar exhortation to listen, “He who has an ear...”

3-Vs. 14: “And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: ‘The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God’s creation.’

The seventh and final letter, this one to Laodicea, a city known for its wealth. In this concluding letter it is fitting to mention the Amen as though this concluding word were attached to a prayer which acknowledged the specific message to each of the seven churches as well as the church as a whole. Jesus Christ as the Amen (which may be taken as the Omega or concluding point of creation, cf. 1.8) is a witness or *martus* (cf. 1.5).

It is interesting to see that the divine Amen which is a type of conclusion is here presented as a beginning (*arche*); creation present as belonging to God can allude to physical creation but in the context of Revelation, suggests 21.1: “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth.” Also consider the opening words of Genesis where *arche* corresponds to *bereshyith*, in the beginning.

3-Vs. 16: So, because you are lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth.

Chliaros for lukewarm, the only reference in the New Testament which is distasteful in Christ’s mouth, the reason why he spews the Laodicean church from his mouth. Emeo (to spew) connotes strong disgust.

Vss. 17-19 delineate to a greater detail this lukewarmness: rich, prosperity which in Christ’s eyes equals to being wretched, pitiable, poor, blind and naked. Christ advises the Laodicean church to purchase refined gold and white garments along with salve for its eyes. He thus appeals to Laodicea’s great wealth as an analogy for spiritual wealth. Vs. 19 states that

recognition of this analogy is painful to make because he reproves (*elegcho*) and chastens (*paideuo*) those whom he loves (*phileo*; connotes desire or longing).

-*Elegcho*: “As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all” [1 Tm 5.20].

-*Paideuo*: “For the Lord disciplines him whom he loves” [Heb 12.6].

-*Phileo*: “Beware of the scribes who like to go about in long robes” [Lk 20.46].

Vs. 19 concludes with a wish for repentance, *metanoeo*, a theme common to the other six churches as already noted.

3-Vs. 20: Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him and he with me.

Another reference to *thura* (door, cf. 3.8). “I arose to open to my beloved, and my hands dripped with myrrh, my fingers with liquid myrrh upon the handles of the bolt” [Sg 5.5]. Here the bride opened the door to receive her beloved but he “had turned and went” [vs. 6]. Vs. 20 situates the bridegroom as the one doing the knocking (*krouo*). “Ask and it will be given you; seek and you will find; knock and it will be opened to you” [Mt 7.7].

The second part of this verse is reminiscent of Lk 22.30: “That you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” *Deipneo* for to eat usually refers to supper, a time when people came together after work to enjoy a leisurely meal. “I will come in to him:” *eiserchomai*, with the preposition *eis* (into); also note the second preposition, *pros* (to), in the sense of making straight for a person. This double use of prepositions is complemented by a further one, “and he with (*meta*) me.”

3-Vs. 21: He who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I myself conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.

The verb *nikao* (to conquer, cf. 2.26) is used in conjunction with co-rulership in the form of sitting (*kathemi*). “The Lord says to my lord: ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool” [Ps 110.1]. Towards the end of vs. 20 the preposition *meta* was used when Christ will eat with a person; here *meta* is transferred or elevated to a sitting-with Christ on his throne.

The second half of vs. 20 refers to Christ’s act of having conquered (*nikao* again); past tense with regard to him and present tense with regard to the person addressed in the verse. Again, cf. Lk 22.30 as in vs. 20 above. Christian tradition ascribes such *nikao* to Christ’s passion, death and resurrection. Following this victory, Christ has sat down (*kathemi* again) with his Father. His ascension may be viewed as this sitting: “I have not yet ascended to my Father and your Father, to my god and your God” [Jn 20.17]. In the verse at hand is

another used of *meta*, with the Father, bringing to completion, as it were the previous two *metas*.

Vs. 22 concludes with yet another “He who has an ear...” but here has a more solemn ring in that it brings to conclusion the dialogue with the seven churches.

Chapter Four

4-Vs. 1: After this I looked and lo, in heaven an open door! And the first voice which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, “Come up hither, and I will show you what must take place after this.”

Here begins the second major division of the Book of Revelation after the introductory words and addresses to the seven churches. These congregations, like every group of people, were imperfect and in need of divine assistance. Despite this, each was an image of the heavenly Jerusalem which is described later in Revelation. For the seven churches (and the Christian church as a whole) to get from here to there, as it were, they must pass from their present limited condition to the heavenly Jerusalem. Hence the words opening chapter four, *meta tauta*, after these.

Eidon (I saw): John’s act of seeing signifies the transit from the earthly (churches) to the heavenly realm; here we have no writing as was the case with the angels belonging to the seven churches, just a simple and direct visual perception followed by *idou* (lo). *Idou* signifies the object of John’s vision or the immediate presence of the “open door” (*thura*). If the sky’s flat surface represents heaven, this door is not vertically situated as with a conventional entrance; instead, it is flat or horizontal with the sky much like a hatch on a ship or an attic on a roof. “And at the end of forty days Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made” [Gen 8.6]. Note a parallel between the seven churches and forty days, two instances of sacred numbers which occur in various forms throughout the Bible.

Chalon for window: from a Hebrew verbal root meaning to pierce. There comes to mind Christ’s side on the cross: “But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear and at once there came out blood and water” [Jn 19.34]. *Thura* occurred twice before, 3.8 & 20.

“First voice:” cf. 1.10 where it was identified with a trumpet located behind John. This trumpet invites John to “come up hither” (*hode*), a specific place of ascent perhaps allowing him to be “behind” where the original trumpet sounded and which is now visible. “And the Lord called Moses to the top of the mountain” [Ex 19.20]. Note that Sinai was a neutral place between Moses and God as expressed by vs. 20’s first words: “and the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain.”

“After this” (*tauta*, plural): implies that John is in the same “place” as God and can view the drama about to be unfolded from this divine perspective.

4-Vs. 2: At once I was in the Spirit and lo, a throne stood in heaven with one seated on the throne!

Eutheos: at once; no spacial movement from John’s earlier position on Patmos and on the Lord’s Day (cf. 1.9-10). Mention of Sunday as commemorating both when God rested from creation and Christ’s resurrection may have a relation with the *eutheos* of vs. 2. That is, this sacred day and time form a *kairos* event as opposed to a *chronos* one; by its very nature the former transcends chronological time (and space). The verse at hand situates John in the only way *kairo*-logical time can be described: “in the Spirit.”

Having undergone transformation, John’s first vision was that of a throne (*thronos*) “in heaven;” note use of the preposition *en* again. The throne was the first thing John noticed followed by a person sitting on it. “I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and his train filled the temple” [Is 6.1]. The Hebrew *shul* for train means the flowing skirt of a robe.

4-Vs. 3: And he who sat there appeared like jasper and carnelian, and round the throne was a rainbow that looked like an emerald.

Cf. Ezk 1.26-8: “And above the firmament over their heads there was the likeness of a throne, in appearance like sapphire” [vs. 26]. In both verses the vision was not of blinding light or of darkness (as with Moses on Sinai) but a softer radiance of light as though coming from precious stones. I.e., the light is mediated, not direct. Note *homoios*, an adjective for appeared with regard to jasper (the wall of the heavenly Jerusalem, 21.18) and carnelian, pertaining to the sixth foundation of the same city (21.20). Thus what the person (God) on the throne is like is transmitted to this city.

The rainbow (*iris*) is *kuklothen* which more precisely means encircling. Usually a rainbow is seen arching from one point to another; here it surrounds the throne. Perhaps this rainbow may be taken as laid out flat on the ground, hence its ability to completely encompass the throne. Viewed from below—that is, earth—this rainbow would be seen as encircling the throne. The phenomenon of a rainbow was a sign of peace between heaven and earth after the flood: “I set my bow (the Hebrew term refers to a weapon commonly perceived) in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth” [Gen 9.13]. Note second use of *homoios*, looked like; used in reference to an emerald (*smargdinos*) usually associated with a green color and is used as part of the heavenly Jerusalem’s foundation (21.19).

Vs. 4: Round the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders clad in white garments with golden crowns upon their heads.

These elders are also mentioned in 4.10; 5.8, 9; 11.16, 17; 19.4. Perhaps the number twenty-four corresponds to the twenty-four degrees or orders of priestly rank delineated in 1 Chron 24. Also this number is divisible by twelve which plays a significant part in the arrangement of the heavenly Jerusalem towards the conclusion of Revelation. Note the location of these elders (*presbuteros*, singular), “around the throne” (*kuklothen*), that is, fully encompassing it with similar thrones. For a parallel verse, cf. Is 24.23: “and before his elders he will manifest his glory.” Here the Hebrew *zaqen* is equivalent to *presbuteros*.

The elders are clothed in white garments (*himation*, singular), this term referring to an external robe. “And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his garments became white as light” [Mt 17.2]. In a sense, the three disciples Peter, James and John are a foreshadowing of the twenty-four elders here at Christ’s Transfiguration. For an earlier reference to crown (*stephanos*), cf. 2.10 where it is used in conjunction with life.

4-Vs. 5: From the throne issue flashes of lightning, and voices and peals of thunder, and before the throne burn seven torches of fire which are the seven spirits of God.

A verse reminiscent of the theophany to Moses on Mt. Sinai: “On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightning, and a thick cloud upon the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast” [Ex 19.16]. Note the absence in Revelation of thick cloud, *hanan kavod*, this adjective being derived from *kavod*, heavy; it is also related to glory. Cf. Gregory of Nyssa’s **Life of Moses** which discusses the meaning of this divine darkness (Gregory of Nyssa Home Page). Another verse paralleling Revelation: “In the midst of the living creatures there was something that looked like burning coals of fire...and out of the fire went forth lightning” [Ezk 1.13].

In the verse at hand, God’s throne in the center of the thrones belonging to the twenty-four elders is the source of lightning which is communicated to them much like spokes from a wheel’s center. Two elements radiate from the throne: one visual (lightning) and the other audible (voices, peals of thunder).

Apart from the throne—in the sense of not directly issuing from it—are the “seven torches of fire,” *lampas* (singular). Compare these seven torches with the seven spirits in 1.4 & 5.6. The LXX uses *lampas* for the Hebrew *lapad* in Ex 20.18: “When all the people perceived the thunderings and the lightning...they were afraid and trembled.” In Rev 4.5, the torches are located before God’s throne (*enopion*) as receptacles of the lightning flashes, and thunder and which may be said to pass through the twenty-four elders en route to bestowing the

seven torches with fire. Contrast *enopion* with the preposition *ek* (“from the throne”). Vs. 5 identifies the torches with God’s seven spirits, *pneuma*. Cf. Tobit 12.15: “I am Raphael, one of the seven holy angels who present the prayers of the saints and enter into the presence of the glory of the Holy One.”

4-Vs. 6: And before the throne there is as it were a sea of glass like crystal. And round the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind.

A continuation of the previous verse which shows the close relationship between it and what follows (and). Another use of the preposition *enopion* (before) with respect to God’s throne, which more or less situates the “sea of glass” on the same plane as the torches just mentioned (*enopion*). Perhaps the seven torches-divine spirits delineate the separation between God’s throne and what lies beyond, not unlike the command to sanctify Mt. Sinai: “Set bounds about the mountain and consecrate it” [Ex 19.23].

The “bound” of vs. 6 is the “sea of glass” (*hualinos*) resembling crystal (*krustallos*), that is to say, a flat, infinite expanse stretching out from the center or divine throne. “And the street of the city was pure gold, transparent as glass” [21.20]. Here the heavenly Jerusalem has one street, not many; it is as though the sea of glass flowed right from before the throne down the city’s center, thereby illumining it. The reflective capacity of both the sea and the heavenly Jerusalem’s only street resemble a mirror to reflect everything within. “For she (wisdom) is a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God and an image of his goodness” [Wis 7.26]. The words in vs. 6—as it were (*hos*) and like (*homoios*)—tend to heighten the distance between God on his throne and the heavenly Jerusalem.

Two prepositions: *en meso* and *kuklo* (round and on each side) with respect to God’s throne. The former implies the center of something, as though the “four living creatures” resided within the throne itself. The latter suggests four sides to the same throne which concurs with the number of these same creatures. Such a paradoxical situation, of being in two places at the same time, is borne out by the fact that the four creatures have eyes (*gemo*: to be full, as though each creature were entirely an eye) looking in two directions: in front (*emprosthen*) and behind (*opisthen*). That is to say, towards the throne at their backs and away from it towards the sea of glass. “And from the midst of it (throne chariot) came the likeness of four living creatures” [Ezk 1.5].

4-Vs. 7: The first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like a flying eagle.

Note the words living creature (*zoon*), a term which intimates being endowed with physical existence in conjunction with the eternal nature of God. Refer to Ezk 1.10 which mentions a man, lion, ox and eagle; more specifically, these creatures had faces resembling them (also

cf. Ezk 10.14). The close association of Revelation's throne with Ezekiel's chariot vision implies something which moves and is not static. The former specifically mentions face (*prosopon*) only in conjunction with a man, not the other three creatures. Each being connotes that which is strong, swift and noble; they all have eyes "in front" and "behind."

4-Vs. 8: And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all round and within, and day and night they never cease to sing, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!"

These four creatures/"eyes" have six wings (*pteryx*, singular) which symbolize mobility and well as the ability to conceal themselves. "Above him stood the seraphim; each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew" [Is 6.3]. *Kanaph* is the Hebrew equivalent for *pteryx* which can also signify an extremity or summit.

In the verse at hand, the creatures are full (*gemo*; cf. vs. 6) of eyes *kuklothen* and *esothen*, all round and within. Compare these two prepositions with the ones in vs. 6, *eprosten* and *opisthen*, in front and behind. Those prepositions used in both verses form a four-side "eye nature" of the four creatures, so to speak. *Esothen* for within can denote interior vision of that which is perceived exteriorly. Compare the Hebrew preposition *savyv* (round about) in Ezk 1.18: "The four wheels had rims and they had spokes; and their rims were full of eyes round about."

Mention of day and night, the unity forming a twenty-four hour cycle, is an expression of watchfulness or sleeplessness signified by the all-pervasive nature of eyes in vs. 8. This is brought out by the term *anapausis*, (not) to cease which is a noun coupled with the verb to have. The object of such constancy is to sing of the three-fold glory (*hagios*, adjective) of God as *pantokrator* as in 1.8; this hymn is closely related to Isaiah's vision, Is 6.2-3. By way of note, consider the number of creatures (four) who sing this triple hymn of glory.

God as *pantokrator* is mentioned as having three temporal divisions: past, present and future tenses. Obviously, the four creatures are praising God in the present tense; the first two tenses are simply different forms of the verb to be, whereas the third (future) involved the verb to come, *erchomai*. Thus the future coming is a kind of future being or extension into the future of the same (divine) being from the past and present.

4-Vs. 9: And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever.

And represents continuous movement of John's vision; note the beginning of vss. 6 (which flows from vs. 5) and 8 which show a fluid continuity regarding this particular vision. Vs. 9

at first appears to contradict vs. 8 which had the four creatures constantly ('day and night,' 'never cease') singing the three-fold hymn to God. That is to say, vs. 9 has whenever (*hotan*) which implies from time to time. On the other hand, vs. 9 specifies this praise in terms of glory, honor and thanks. The phrase "forever and ever" uses *aion* or age signifying unity of that "was," "is" and "is to come" of the previous verse. This familiar New Testament expression uses the preposition *eis* (into) for continuous flow or penetration of divine reality into that which is temporal.

4-Vs. 10: The twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever; they cast their crowns before the throne singing.

Three uses of prepositions stand out here: *enopion*, *epi* and *pros-kuneo* (before, upon and towards-which). They all relate to motion-towards-which, a forward attention directed to God on his throne. Cf. Ps 47.8: "God reigns over the nation; God sits on his holy throne. The princes of the people gather as the people of the God of Abraham." The Greek text has say (*lego*) in place of singing. Note that both verbs—cast and saying—are in the present tense which indicates that action is continuous.

4-Vs. 11: "Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you did create all things, and by your will they existed and were created."

Since the casting and saying of vs. 10 are continuous, the same may be applied to this song. *Axios* or worthy is equivalent to the Hebrew *doxa* or glory; both imply heaviness, weightiness, and are typical attributes of the divinity. The other divine attributes are glory, honor and power which fill out the fundamental meaning of *axios*. God receives them all (*lambano*).

The above mentioned attributes acknowledge God as creator; *ktizo* is the verb used here, reminiscent of the first chapter of Genesis. Note that Genesis begins each day of creation with Let there be or *yehy*. Such words are different from the fabrication of an object whether animate or inanimate; *yehy* is more a coming into existence and allowing it to autonomously proceed on its own. As for the Revelation song, existence (*eimi*, to be) results from *ktizo/yehy* but specified as a result of God's will, *thelema*. Note the second use of *ktizo*, passive aorist, as though the divine will "passively" effected existence of created things. The intent is to emphasize God willing as opposed to fabrication.

Chapter Five

5-Vs. 1: And I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back sealed with seven seals.

A verse reminiscent of 1 Kg 22.19: “I saw the Lord sitting on his throne and all the host of heaven standing beside him on his right hand and on his left.” The conjunctive “and” denotes continuation of the last verse’s song into a new chapter. The Greek has upon (*epi*) for “on,” a more stability of location, as it were. Now attention shifts to God—who is often called the one “seated on the throne” as opposed to outrightly calling him God—or in this instance, a scroll (*biblion*; as opposed to a *biblos* or book) An example of the latter is Mt 1.1: “The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.” Both a scroll and a book are rolled up when not in use, i.e., they are relatively compact and can be stored and carried easily. A scroll implies that its contents can be either revealed (such is this book’s title) and hidden.

The divine person who is upon (*epi*) the throne also has a scroll upon his *dexia* (right hand). In a sense, the scroll is “upon” the throne there with him. The scroll is specified in three parts:

1) as “written within” (*esothēn*); cf. 4.8: “the four living creatures...full of eyes all round and within.” Such “internal” vision may be likened to a sphere containing a definite number of eyes which gaze both at each and towards the sphere’s center. In the verse at hand, this within-ness suggests that the scroll is rolled up, not revealed; when open, the scroll manifests the eyes, as it were, or words written on the parchment.

2) “written on the back” (*opisthen*). “Four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind” (4.9). The verse under consideration has the scroll written on both sides of the rolled-up parchment making it visible even when in this state of un-revelation. Because the prepositions (front, behind) apply to the four creatures, they too participate in this alternation between being unmanifest and revealed. Also, the scroll may be said to be living just like the creatures.

3) “sealed with seven seals” (*sphragis*). “For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord” [Rom 9.2]. For anything to be sealed means that it is not manifest; usually a king or someone in high position like him has the authority to set a seal on an official document which can be broken only by designated persons and at specific times. The number seven plays an important role in Revelation as first noted with regard to the seven churches (1.4). Again, this association between a scroll and the churches means that the document is more than something written down but is alive.

5-Vs. 2: And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?”

The “strong angel” (*ischuros*) is identified only by his power, not by name; also the indefinite is used which could mean that this angel is a strong one among many. His strength is equivalent to his “loud voice” (*megalos*, better, great). Use of “and” here as well as beginning 5.1 suggests continued activity stemming from the act of obeisance by the twenty-four elders, vs. 10.

The proclamation in the form of a question has to do with opening the scroll. A certain parallel with its opening can be drawn with a similar “strong” angel in Gen 3.24: “(God) placed the cherubim and a flaming sword which turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.” Thus one serves to keep closed and the other to open. To actually open the scroll means to unroll it, keeping in mind that it is written inside and on back. Only a person who is worthy, (*axios*) can unroll the scroll; cf. use of the adjective in 4.11.

First comes the opening followed by breaking (*luomai*) its seals, more specifically, loosening them which could mean melting their wax, the usual composition of such seals. *Sphragis* is the word for seal here as in vs. 1 where the number is given as seven. Draw a parallel between the shut nature of a seal and the equally shut Jericho which Joshua brought down and where the number seven plays a dominant role such as the number of trumpets, days, etc. In the verse at hand, the strong angel poses a question with regard to opening and breaking which is more or less asked rhetorically.

5-Vs. 3: And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it.

An answer to the strong angel’s question just asked, that is, no creature (human or otherwise) can open the scroll. Note the three locations with regards to the earth: on, under as well as heaven where presumably reference is made to angelic beings. The opening pertains to the scroll’s unraveling, of laying it bare for everyone to behold.

Verse four has John in the presence of this scroll along with the strong angel. Although John is present with those not worthy (*axios*), he is not specifically mentioned as belonging to this group (“in heaven, on earth, under the earth”). This gives John an occasion to weep, *klaio*. “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me but weep for yourselves and for your children” [Lk 23.28], that is, for those “in heaven, on earth and under the earth.” The Greek for “look into it” simply has look (*blepo*) minus any preposition.

5-Vs. 4: and I wept much that no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it.

The verb *klaio* implies not just weeping but loud howling amplified by *polu* (much). The reason? No one worthy (*axios*) to open the scroll as well as to look into it, *blepo* meaning to see in the sense of having the power of sight. Note the passive of *heurisko*, to find. Implied

is a thorough search the Lord and those in his service scoured the heavenly court but found no one as *axios*.

5-Vs. 5: Then one of the elders said to me, "Weep not; lo, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals."

One of the elders is from among the twenty-four mentioned earlier, that is, from around the throne. This verse is reminiscent of Jn 20.13, "Woman, why are you weeping" (*klaio*)? As with Mary, the need to hold back tears stems from Christ's resurrection which is also celebrated in the Book of Revelation, albeit in its fullest form.

Two titles with Old Testament roots: "Judah is a lion's whelp; from the prey, my son, you have gone up" [Gen 49.9]. "There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots" [Is 11.1]. Both are prophecies, that is, they are not yet fulfilled at the time of their utterance. However, in Revelation these prophecies have come to pass which is perceived in terms of opening the scroll and its seals. That is, Christ can open the seven churches, symbolic of the Church as a whole and see the "new Jerusalem...prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" [21.2].

5-Vs. 6: And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

Another mention of the throne with God the Father suggested as being upon it. Despite this implication, note John's emphasis upon the throne as opposed to anyone sitting there. Furthermore, the prepositional phrase *en meso* is used pertaining to all three. Now John introduces Christ as lamb (*arnion*), a clear reference to his sacrificial death which the unrevealed scroll recounts, better, gives a prophecy. "Like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth" [Is 53.7]. The Hebrew *seh* denotes the lamb used at Passover: "Every man shall take a lamb according to their fathers' houses" [Ex 12.3]. Certainly this lamb was slaughtered to ward off destruction by God, but the verse at hand has the word *hos*, as, which signifies the imitation of a state such as death. Keeping in mind the Exodus injunction, the Lamb (Christ) bore fatal injuries which occurred "in the evening" [vs. 6]; the Hebrew reads "between (*beyn*) the evenings" which has a certain parallel with the between of vs. 6, *en meso*.

The Lamb has seven horns (*keras*) and seven eyes; the former signifies might as in Daniel 7 & 8. Also cf. Lk 1.69: "He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David." The number seven can once more imply the close affiliation between Christ-as-Lamb and his seven churches; while multiple, their diversity is unified in one

head, that of the Lamb. The latter (eyes) is symbolic of watchfulness with regards to these seven churches. “If your eye is sound (*aplous*) your whole body will be full of light” [Mt 6.22].

The final part of vs. 6 has the seven spirits being sent “into (*eis*) all the earth,” that is, full presence-in. This is reminiscent of Christ’s commission to his disciples, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations” [Mt 28.19]. The spirits—keep in mind they have seven horns as well—extend the Lamb’s reign through the seven churches. “These seven are the eyes of the Lord which range through the whole earth” [Zech 4.10]. The Hebrew for to range is *shut*, literally, to run quickly, to row; intimated is the snap of a whip and therefore a sudden movement. Compare this use of *shut* with Satan: “From going to and fro on the earth and from walking up and down on it” [Job 1.7].

5-Vs. 7: and he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne.

“And he went:” the Lamb traversed some (physical) distance between himself and the throne, intimating that Christ as having assumed human nature is removed from God the Father. No sign of submission as a subject to a king is implied; he simply took the scroll from the Father. Note that it is his right hand (*dexia*): “The Lord says to my lord: ‘Sit at my right hand’” [Ps 110.1]. Despite the distance, both the Lamb and the one sitting on the throne are equals.

5-Vs. 8: And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp and with golden bowls full of incense which are the prayers of the saints.

Again, the Lamb does not give any sign of submission to the one on the throne. This contrasts with the submission of the creatures and elders who fell down (*pipto*) not before the throne but before the Lamb. Note that at this point the Lamb does not yet open the scroll; just the act of taking it is significant enough to effect this worship.

Two signs of worship:

1) harp (*kithara*) as in 1 Cor 14.7: “If even lifeless instruments such as the flute or the harp do not give distinct notes, how will anyone know what is played?” Two other Revelation references are 14.2 & 15.2. *Kithara* immediately brings to mind one of the chief instruments in the Psalter, for example: “Awake, O harp and lyre! I will awake the dawn” [57.8]! Perhaps those playing this harp in Revelation have in mind the sentiments of praise contained in this book of prayer.

2) incense (*thumiama*): “And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense” [Lk 1.11]. As opposed to such an altar Revelation has “golden bowls” (*phiale*) which contrast with those bowls full of divine wrath as frequently mentioned in chapter sixteen. The bowls of incense do not yet seem to have been burned; they are equivalent to prayers (*proseuche*, in the sense of entreaties). More specifically such prayers belong to the saints (*hagios*), the same term attributed to the holy one of 3.7; cf. 8.3 & 4. Saint is a term frequently used by those who acknowledge Jesus Christ: “The saints who are also faithful in Christ Jesus” [Eph 1.1]. Perhaps reference to these persons are members of the seven churches discussed earlier.

5-Vs. 9: and they sang a new song, saying: “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain and by your blood you ransomed men for God from every tribe and people and nation.”

Note the use of “and” which began each verse from 2 and continues through 10 which indicates a continuous, unbroken chain of events. Here the conjunctive “and” serves to introduce the “new song” (*ode*), an expression taken from the Psalter: “He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God” [40.3]; also cf. Is 42.10. Implied is an “old” song which bespeaks fulfillment of all Old Testament songs, more specifically, those which have as their subject in hidden, unrevealed fashion Christ as Lamb.

Keep in mind that the scroll which Christ takes is written on the back as well as within (cf. 5.1).

Sphazo: to slay (with violence) as used in vss. 9 & 12 plus several other places. This terrible death—implying Christ’s crucifixion—is in sharp contrast to him being *axios* (worthy). The blood shed by Christ is equivalent to the exchange of currency, of paying ransom (verb, *agorazo*). “For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many” [Mk 10.45]. Note dative case “to God,” with the intimation of direction towards-which, an ongoing process. This use of the dative is coupled with *en to haimati*, in (your) blood,” presence-in. In contrast, the *ek* (from) signifies departure with regard to tribe, people and nation.

5-Vs. 10: and has made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on earth.”

An image modeled after that of Israel: kingdom and priest (*basileia* and *hiereus*), traditional distinction between temporal and religious spheres. “King of Salem, priest of the Most High God” [Heb 7.1]. The interesting thing about vs. 10 is that both elements have their reign (*basileuo*) not in heaven but on earth; another reference: 20.6: “but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and they shall reign with him a thousand years.”

5-Vs. 11: Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders, the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands.

The throne is now the silent center of praise (*phone*, voice). Note that John's hearing is preceded by a looking (*idomai*); more specifically, the beings are around (*kuklos*) the throne presumably in concentric circles: first the living creatures followed by the elders; last come countless numbers of angels.

The purpose of this heavenly assembly is praise of Christ as Lamb which parallels that in vss. 9-10. Again, Christ is called *axios* (worthy) to receive seven offerings: power, wealth, wisdom, light, honor, glory and blessing. Again note the number seven.

Vs. 13 continues this seven-fold theme of praise by those in heaven and on earth. Note the use of prepositions: "in (*en*) heaven" and "on (*epi*) earth." The latter has two further divisions of lesser importance, if you will: "under the earth" and "in the sea."

Vs. 14 specifies the (twenty-four) elders as worshiping (*proskuneo*) which is bound up with the Hebrew "Amen," a term frequently used at the conclusion of prayers. It is as though these elders were bringing to completion all the praise that had preceded.

Chapter Six

6-Vs. 1: Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures say as with a voice of thunder, "Come!"

A new phase in Revelation, when the Lamb-Christ opens (*anoigo*) the first of seven seals which in this context and mentioned above is technically an unrolling of the scroll. Note that this scroll as well as the other six are not read, that is, the listeners are not hearing spoken words but see...behold...action. Perhaps this process is akin to the ability of ancient peoples to picture and thus bring alive the words that they are hearing. At the same time God the Father is sitting on the throne listening, most likely in the same fashion as the audience around his throne.

One of the four living creature—which can imply one of the four Gospels—invites the vast audience composed of heavenly and earthly listeners to come (*erchomai*), that is, approach the Lamb as he reads from the first scroll. Such an invitation is not politely given out but with great force, a "voice of thunder" (*bronte*). "Moses spoke and God answered him in thunder" [Ex 19:19]. Since it is John the Evangelist who is listening along with this vast

multitude, perhaps one of the four living creatures was the eagle (cf. 4.7), the symbol usually attributed to John.

6-Vs. 2: And I saw, and behold, a white horse, and its rider had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.

The act of beholding (*idou*) connotes a fuller, more comprehensive seeing. Most likely the rider (*kathemenos*, present middle participle; literally, one seated) is Jesus Christ as in 19.11. “The chariot with the black horses goes toward the north country, the white ones go after them, and the dappled ones go towards the south country” [Zech 6.6]. The color white (*leukos*) often represents purity; in the verse at hand, the white colored horse may be used as a rallying point for the army, that is, a clearly visible sign in the midst of battle.

Toxos (bow): the only mention of this weapon in Revelation. “If a man does not repent, God will whet his sword; he has bent and strung his bow” [Ps 7.12].

Stephanos (crown): as in 4.10, reference to the twenty-four elders. Note the passive use, *edothe*, was given, presumably by God the Father seated on the throne. Such bestowal of kingship allows Christ to engage in conquering (*nikao*) and to conquer. Note the two forms of the same verb: one a present participle and the other in a *hina* clause (in order that) signifying future activity. Both the present and future are united in the one bestowal of the crown.

6-Vs. 3: When he opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, “Come!”

A second living creature to correspond with the second seal, that is, an ox, traditionally symbolic of St. Matthew’s Gospel. Keep in mind that while this is being done, the first rider has left conquering and to conquer. *Erchou* for the command, Come, which is used for all seven scrolls. Such coming alludes to the unrolling of these scrolls. It is as though the action association with each one proceeded directly from the scroll itself.

6-Vs. 4: And out came another horse, bright red; its rider was permitted to take peace from the earth so that men should slay one another; and he was given a great sword.

Red (*purros*) can symbolize war and bloodshed; more specifically, it pertains to the color of fire, *pur* being the noun. The Hebrew equivalent is ‘*adam*’ from which is derived man. This horse advances from the second seal which is not explicitly mentioned.

The rider of this red horse is allowed—note *edothe* (was permitted, as the rider of the white horse regarding a crown)—with respect to his authority to remove peace (*eirene*) from the earth. The preposition *ek* (from) suggests a violent removal. Compare Mt 10.34: “Do not

think that I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace but a sword.” Perhaps the red horse...in the sense of being “adam”...may point to Christ as incarnate among human beings, although this certainly is not the traditional explanation of the color red. Compared with the lack of peace which causes men to slay each other, Christ has a sword (*machairos*), the same term used in vs. 4. This sword of Christ is used to upset the normal course of human relationships, that is, in comparison with himself.

6-Vs. 5: When he opened the third seal I heard the third living creature say, “Come!” And I saw and behold, a black horse, and its rider had a balance in his hand.

Another correspondence as with all seven seals between the command “come” and John’s having seen (past tense) and his beholding (present tense). The black (*melas*) horse usually symbolizes famine which often follows war. With regard to vs. 2 above, Zechariah mentions four chariots with four colored horses prepare the messianic judgment of the earth. Note that they all receive the commission to “patrol the earth” [vs. 7]; the black horses go towards the north who “have set my Spirit at rest in the north country” [vs. 8].

The balance (*zugos*; also means yoke) implies weighing in the sense of passing judgment. “...all who are under the yoke of slavery” [1 Tm 6.1]. In a sense, this rider has the task of submitting people under the yoke of Jesus Christ: “Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in hear, and you will find rest for your souls” [Mt 11.29]. Note the “rest” of this verse with that in Zech 6.8 above.

6-Vs. 6: And I heard what seemed to be a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, “A quart of wheat for a denarius; but do not harm oil and wine!”

An interjection between the opening of the first three seals and the fourth. John’s “seeming” to hear and the actual words he did hear is not that clear. The voice (singular) could be coming from the four creatures as one; it is in their midst (*en meso*) or in their very center as though each creature directed his voice there where it became mingled with the other voices. Perhaps John was uncertain as to which living creature the voice was attributed, hence his “seeming.”

The “quart of wheat” equals a day’s wage, and the denarius equals a day’s pay. Vs. 6 has this amount of wheat being sold for great price, thereby suggesting famine. “After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard” [Mt 20.2]. This parable concludes with the master giving each worker one denarius regardless of what hour they were hired. “So the last will be first, and the first last” [vs. 16].

The command not to harm (*adikeo*) oil and wine further insinuates famine, perhaps a siege. “The jar of meal shall not be spent, and the cruse of oil shall not fail until the day that the Lord sends rain upon the earth” [1 Kg 17.14].

6-Vs. 7: When he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, “Come!”

The last invitation to come is noted in vs. 5. Here as in other verses note the conjunctive *kai* or “and” to show the close connection between the activity at hand.

6-Vs. 8: And I saw, and behold, a pale horse, and its rider’s name was Death, and Hades followed him; and they were given power over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by wild beasts of the earth.

Vs. 7 has the opening of the fourth seal with the command, “Come” by the fourth living creature. Note that the four living creatures are associated with the first four scrolls only, not the remaining three scrolls.

Chloros or pale which is more a yellow-green color signifying illness or death. It can also refer to the color of grass: “Then he commanded them all to sit down by companies upon the green grass” [Mk 6.39]. In the verse at hand, Death (*Thanatos*) is personified who has (presumably) another rider behind him (*akoloutheo*, to follow) called Hades (Hades), the abode of the dead. Note that 1.18 has Christ having “the keys of Death and Hades,” i.e., he has control over this particular scroll. For another reference to Hades, cf. Mt 16.18: “and the power of Hades shall not prevail against it.” The “fourth of the earth” can be read with the traditional division of creation into earth, air, fire and water.

Note the four-fold affliction by this rider: sword, famine, pestilence and wild beasts.

Romphaia (sword) is a very large two-handed weapon, not short and dagger-like. “And a sword will pierce through your own soul” [Lk 2.35].

6-Vs. 9: When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne.

Thusiasterion or altar as in Heb 13.10: “We have an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat.” This altar could represent Christ’s cross, i.e., the Lamb who had been slain. In this case those present at the crucifixion—Mary, Mary the wife of Clopas, Mary Magdalene and John—can be representative of those souls under the altar (cf. Jn 19.25). However, these witnesses were not slain “for the word (*logos*) of God but foreshadow those who would shed their blood for Christ. The most notable reference to altar in the Old Testament is the one given to Moses on Mount Sinai as described in chapter 27. The

important words here are “as it has been shown you on the mountain, so shall it be made” [vs. 8] where there is a direct correlation between seeing and making. Also note that John was present at the unrolling of these seven scrolls as well as at Calvary; he thus bridges the two poles of redemption.

The souls under the altar were witnesses (*marturion*) for Christ; they too have participated with Moses in the correlation between seeing and making. According to Rev 1.5, Jesus Christ himself is the prime witness: the “first born of the dead.” Thus the souls partake of his *prototokos* which also applies to creation: “He is the image of the invisible God, the first born of all creation” [Col 1.15].

6-Vs. 10: They cried out with a loud voice, “O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell upon the earth?”

Phone megale or loud voice as in 1.10 & 5.2, this time directed, to Christ as Sovereign Lord (*despotes*), a term signifying absolute authority as in the LXX of Is 1.24: “The Lord of hosts, the Might One of Israel.” *Despotes* can apply to a corrupt ruler, but in the verse at hand, this term is described as being *hagios* and *althinos*.

The question, more like a desperate plea (*krazo*, to scream), may be put in the mouths of those under Christ’s cross as noted in the previous verse. “And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel” [Rom 9.27]. *Heos pote* (how long) is used with regard to temporal extension. It is used with regard to knowing when Christ will both judge and avenge (*krino* and *ekdikeyo*) “our blood.” “For judgment I came into this world” [Jn 9.39]. “Vengeance (*ekdikesis*) is mine, I will repay, says the Lord” [Rom 12.19, quoting Dt 32.35]. Note that this verse uses the verbal root to the noun *shalom* (*shalam*) for repay which also means peace in the sense of making whole or completing an action. Both judgment and vengeance are applied to those dwelling (*katoikeo*) on earth in the sense of persons who have made the earth (as opposed to heaven) their permanent dwelling place, the place where the blood of those under the altar had been shed.

6-Vs. 11: Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.

Note the contrast between blood (the color red) and the robe or stole (color white), this being a long, regal type of garment (cf. 7.9 & 14). “And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side dressed in a white robe” [Mk 16.9]. In light of this verse, the souls under the heavenly altar may be taken as witnesses to Christ’s resurrection. Their rest (*anapauo*) extends for a “little longer” (*kronos*), this term referring to temporal extension as opposed to an intemporal *kairos* event. It is as though such persons were

waiting behind stage for completion of the main act or until the other scrolls are opened. “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” [Mt 11.28]. Thus there is a direct interdependence between *kronos* and *anapauo*.

The rest lasts a specific time: to complete (*pleroo*) the number of fellow servants and brethren (*sundoulos* and *adelphos*). The former implies service and the latter fellowship or equality. The verb *pleroo* is often used regarding the fulfillment of scriptural prophecy as in Mt 1.22: “All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken.” No specific number is given in the verse under consideration; implied is that persecution will have come to an end since this number reaches fulfillment when Christians were to be killed (*apokteino*). “And might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby bringing the hostility to an end” [Eph 2.16].

6-Vs. 12: When he opened the sixth seal, I looked and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood.

This verse is reminiscent of Is 34.4 and Jl 2.31: “All the host of heaven shall rot away, and the skies roll up like a scroll.” “The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes.” As for the earthquake: “And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook, and the rocks were split” [Mt 27.51]. Also note Ezk 32.7: “When I blot you out, I will cover the heavens and make their stars dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give its light.” Despite the horror of such events, they are done for the purpose of making people say, “Truly this was the Son of God” [Mt 27.54]!

The sun having sackcloth connotes penance; that the brightest object in the sky which gives life takes up such penitential garments much like the citizens of Nineveh: “Let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them cry mightily to God; yes, let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence which is in his hands” [Jon 3.8].

6-Vs. 13: And the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale.

For the significance of the fig tree, cf. Mt 21.19: “How did the fig tree wither at once?” While not exactly the same as figs falling at winter (*olunthos*, an unripe fig which grows during winter), both point to an immanent coming of God. The Gospel parable occurs shortly before Christ’s passion, death and resurrection.

Anemos: gale as Mt 7.25: “And the rain fell, and floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, but it did not fall because it had been founded on the rock.” Note the

second use of *seio* (to shake), the first being in the previous verse as a noun, *seismos* (earthquake).

6-Vs. 14: The sky vanished like a scroll that is rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place.

Ouranos for sky, the realm where the heavenly bodies dwell. It is interesting to see that the sky is like this six scroll. An apt description for firmament is found in Gen 1.7: “And God made the firmament and separated the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament.” The Hebrew word is *raqyah*, that which is spread out. For the sky to vanish (*apochorizo*; more accurately, to be removed or separated) suggests returning to that state before God made the firmament, namely, “without form and void” [Gen 1.2]. In other words, the verse at hand is a reversal of the divine creative process. In addition, mountains and islands—the former being symbolic of eternity—are removed (*kineo*) from their places (*topos*). Cf. Rev 16.20 for a similar verse. Despite the fact that “every mountain and island was removed from its place” vs. 15 has people of every class taking refuge in caves of mountains.

6-Vs. 15: The kings of the earth the great men and the generals and the rich and the strong and every one, slave and free, hid in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains,

This verse includes virtually the entire population of the earth ranging from kings to slaves. Because such obvious, stable elements as the sky, mountains and hills had disappeared, these people will suffer the same fate. Note that despite hiding in rocks of mountains, they fail to recognize that they too will be removed from their places.

6-Vs. 16: Calling to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb.

A verse taken from Hos 10.8: “And they shall say to the mountains, ‘Cover us,’ and to the hills, ‘Fall upon us.’” Also cf. Lk 23.30 where Christ quotes this verse en route to his crucifixion which foretells the Roman destruction of Jerusalem. Compare the sentiments here with 1 Pt 4.18 which quotes Prov 11.31 (LXX): “If the righteous man is scarcely saved, where will the impious and sinner appear?”

The desire to be covered by what amounts to a rock slide or avalanche is twofold:

1) to avoid beholding the face (*prosopon*) of God the Father on the throne. The seraphim hide their faces but for a different reason, that is, out of reverence. “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory” [Is 6.3]. If the entire earth is

thus full of divine glory, then even the mountains and rocks of vs. 16 contains this same glory.

2) the Lamb's wrath (*orge*; also revenge). "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come" [Mt 3.7]? Also: "He who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests upon him" [Jn 3.36]. Note the verb *meno* (to remain) coupled with the preposition *epi* (upon), signifying an abiding presence of such divine *orge*.

6-Vs. 17: "For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand before it?"

The word *orge* shifts from belonging to the Lamb in vs. 16 to those wishing to flee from him. "For the day of the Lord is great and very terrible; who can endure it" [Jl 2.11]? "Great day" can be taken as another way of saying a *kairos* event. Joel continues in the next verse with the means of enduring this day: "Return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments." This rending is the exact opposite of wishing to have the rocks and mountains fall on those people wishing to escape the Lamb's wrath. The exhortation to stand before it is summed up in the Greek verb *histemi*; the preposition "before" is lacking, just a simple presence before divine wrath is sufficient in the spirit of repentance stated by the prophet Joel.