

Chrys C. Caragounis

History and Supra-history in the Book of Revelation

The Author, His Book and Its Message



Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament

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Chrys C. Caragounis

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the Book of Revelation*

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Τερᾷ μνήμη
Σοφίας,
ἡ ἑπτὰ καὶ τετταράκοντα ἔτη
ἐν εὐτυχίᾳ μετ' ἐμοῦ ἐβίωσεν, καὶ παράδειγμα
φιλοστόργου μητρὸς τέκνοις ἡμετέροις γενομένη,
νῦν ἱερὸν ἐν Κυρίῳ κοιμᾶται ὕπνον·
τιμῆς ἕνεκα
ἀνατίθημι

Preface

Scholarly research not infrequently has its surprises. A scholar may commence his work with a certain pre-understanding of his subject and then find, to his surprise, that the conclusions at which he arrives were not the expected ones. This turned out to be the case in this particular instance. For many decades I have been engaged in research primarily in the New Testament. I have also taken a fair interest in Old Testament subjects, and, moreover, spent considerable energy in various aspects of classical Hellenic concerns: culture, history and literature. Moreover, rejecting the value of the concept of 'New Testament Greek,' I have published several books on the diachronic development of the Hellenic language and Its Historical Greek Pronunciation, and on how the entire history of the γλῶττα ἑλληνίς – from Homēros till the present day – is important for a more exact understanding of the text of the New Testament. But heretofore I had not taken the time to address the Book of Revelation in a scholarly manner. This happened only in the past two-three years and the conclusions to which I was led at the end of my research were rather unexpected.

That the Book of Revelation is different to all the other books of the New Testament is quite obvious. But what this difference means in particular can only be evaluated at the end of a presuppositionless and honest research.

The Book of Revelation is currently perhaps the most appealed to book of the New Testament. Not only do people of Christian convictions often invoke it in their interpretation of the turbulent international events of our time but also journalists and other bloggers utilize some of its jargon – as for example, the concept of Armagedōn – to dramatize current events in order to enlarge the readership of their writings. Nothing of this has anything to do with the real nature and message of Revelation. As is the case with all other documents of the New Testament, Revelation, too, must be interpreted soberly and objectively, against its background, within the parameters of its historical setting, and in the light of analogous contemporary literature as well as its relation to it.

This is what is attempted in the present study. Full account is taken of the historical circumstances; most of the bearing concepts of the book are analysed and their connections with previous literature are explored. In particular, the impingement of pseudepigraphical apocalyptic literature is brought to bear and comparisons with analogous texts from the Old and the New Testaments are presented. In this book, particular emphasis has been placed on the primary source material, not only from the Old and New Testaments but especially from the Jewish pseudepigraphic literature. It is these apocalyptic writings that supplied our author with

both some of the basic ideas he uses as well as with the way he utilizes these ideas. This material is extensively quoted, whenever available, in the original language. However, quotations from all extra-biblical sources (apocryphal, pseudepigraphical and ancient Hellenic authors) are followed by a translation into English.

The author of Revelation was informed by a dimension that was brought into the theological discussion by the Book of Daniel. This was the concept of 'supra-history.' This concept was taken up and utilized to full extent by the authors of the apocalyptic movement. These authors worked within the parameters of Judaism. The originality and uniqueness of the author of Revelation is that he put it to use within the Christian context, thus producing a unique book among the books that came to be included in the New Testament Canon. He 'read' history through supra-history.

Today there are, indeed, many 'readings' of Revelation. It is my hope that '*my* reading' will contribute a new dimension in the understanding of Revelation and that the nature and purpose of the Book, as they emerge in the present study, will somehow correspond with the intention of its author.

The index of passages in all its parts is complete. The index of names and subjects, though not exhaustive in all its entries, will hopefully be found to be quite rich and of great help in locating important concepts and themes.

At this point I wish to record my gratitude to two scholars who have given me the benefit of their comments. Associate Professor Tord Fornberg of Uppsala University, a dear colleague and friend of five and one half decades, read parts of this book and offered his positive remarks. Dr Arie W. Zwiep, my one-time student, but now Professor at the Vrij Universiteit of Amsterdam read the whole book, making certain suggestions for improvement, and expressing his wish for a speedy publication.

Finally, I wish to thank the editors of WMANT, Prof David du Toit and Prof Michael Tilly, both of whom acted speedily in their evaluation of my manuscript and gave me the privilege of becoming one of the authors of their eminent series.

Chrys C. Caragounis, Lund, June 2025

Contents

Preface.....	7
Contents.....	9
Transliteration of Hellenic Names.....	13
Introduction.....	15
Chapter One The Author of Revelation.....	21
1. The External Evidence	21
2. The Internal Evidence	27
2.1 The Name of the Author.....	27
2.2 The Author's Title.....	28
2.3 The Author's Literary Composition	29
2.4 How the Author Defends His Work	49
2.5 Conclusions	51
Chapter Two The Book of Revelation: The Genre of the Book of Revelation ..	55
Chapter Three The Contents and Structure of Revelation	63
1. The Contents of Revelation	63
2. The Structure of Revelation.....	70
Chapter Four Some of the Bearing Concepts of Revelation	77
1. "One like a Son of Man".....	77
2. The Twenty-four Presbyters	84
3. The Four Living Beings = <i>Cherubim</i>	86
4. The Lamb.....	90
5. The Seven Seals	93
6. The Seven Trumpets.....	98
7. The Seven Vials.....	103
8. The Two Women.....	106
8.1 The Woman with Child	106
8.2 The Harlot = Babylon = Rome	108

9.	The Beasts	110
9.1	The Beast from the Sea	117
9.2	The Beast from the Earth	117
9.3	The Scarlet Beast	118
9.4	An Attempt at Synthesis	120
10.	The Mark of the Beast	124
11.	The Number of the Beast	127
12.	The Interpretation of the Seven Kings and the Eighth King	131
13.	The Numerical Figures of Revelation	146
13.1	The Numbers of the Cavalry Host	146
13.2	The Amount of Blood Flowing from the Winepress	148
13.3	The Size and Shape of the New Jerusalem	150
13.4	Conclusions	152
14.	Armagedōn	152

Chapter Five The Eschatology of Jesus and Paul Compared with that of Revelation.....

1.	The Eschatological Discourse in the Synoptics	158
1.1	Jesus' Eschatological Discourse	158
1.2	A Comparison among Matthew, Mark and Luke	162
1.3	The Course of the Eschatological Events in Jesus' Discourse	165
i.	Appearance of False Christs	165
ii.	Wars	165
iii.	Famine (and Pestilences), Outcome(s) of War and Earthquakes	166
iv.	Unprecedented Persecutions	166
v.	The Great 'Falling Away'	166
vi.	The Preaching of the Gospel to the Whole World as Testimony against Them	166
vii.	Cosmic Signs	168
2.	The Eschatology of Paul's Epistles	169
2.1	First Thessalonians	170
2.2	Second Thessalonians	172
2.2.1	Terms that Need Elucidation	173
α.	Ἐνέστηκεν	173
β.	Ἀποστασία	175
γ.	Τὸ κατέχον	177
δ.	Ὁ κατέχων	177
ε.	Τῇ ἐπιφανείᾳ τῆς παρουσίας αὐτοῦ	178

2.2.2 Syntactical Problems	178
2.2.3 Coded Language	180
2.2.4 The Course of Eschatological Events	181
3. A Comparison between the Teaching of Jesus and the Teaching of Paul.....	183
4. The Eschatology of Revelation	186
5. A Comparison between the Eschatologies of Jesus, Paul and Revelation.....	190
5.1 Unprecedented Tribulations	193
5.2 Sword and Captivity.....	193
5.3 Jerusalem Will Be Trodden Down	195
5.4 The Appearance of False Christs and False Prophets	195
5.5 Cosmic Events	196
5.6 Paralyzing Effect on Men	196
Chapter Six The Thousand-Year Reign of Christ on Earth.....	199
1. Introductory	199
2. <i>Chiliasm</i> in the Early Church	199
3. The Bases for a Millennium	200
3.1 Jewish Expectations	200
3.2 The Johannine Authorship of Revelation.....	206
3.3 The Hebrew Idea that one Day with the Lord is as a Thousand Years with Man.....	207
4. What Does Rev 20:1–4 Teach?.....	210
5. The <i>Locus</i> of the Millennium	214
6. The Evidence of the Rest of the New Testament.....	216
6.1 The Olivet Discourse in the Synoptics.....	216
6.2 1 Cor 15:20–28	217
6.3 1 Cor 15:50–52	219
6.4 1 Th 4:13–17.....	219
6.5 2 Th 2:1–12.....	220
6.6 2 Pt 3:3–13.....	221
6.7 Paul's Testimony	221
Chapter Seven Parallel Passages between Revelation and the Rest of the New Testament, the Old Testament and the Jewish Apocryphal and Pseudepigraphic Literature	225
1. Parallel Passages between Revelation and the Rest of the New Testament.....	225

2. Parallel Passages between Revelation and the Old Testament.....	229
3. Parallel Passages between Revelation and the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha.....	236
4. Conclusions.....	248
Chapter Eight The Supra-historical Relevance of the Apocalypse.....	255
1. Introductory.....	255
2. The Authorship of Revelation.....	256
3. The Book of Revelation is Apocalyptic, not Prophetic.....	259
4. What is the Apocalyptic Genre of Revelation?.....	260
5. The Central Theme of Revelation: The Destruction of the Roman Empire.....	262
6. The Supra-historical Relevance of Revelation.....	262
6.1 Supra-history in Daniel.....	263
6.1.1 Information and Hints in Daniel.....	267
6.1.2 Near Eastern and Hellenic Sources.....	268
6.1.3 Daniel's Dynamic View of History.....	271
6.2 Supra-history in Jewish Apocalyptic Works.....	276
6.3 The Supra-historical Relevance of Revelation.....	279
7. An Evaluation of the Book of Revelation.....	298
8. The Abiding Relevance of the Apocalypse.....	306
Summary and Conclusions.....	311
Bibliography.....	333
Index of Passages.....	361
Index of Authors.....	395
Index of Names and Subjects.....	399

Transliteration of Hellenic Names

To the extent that is feasible Hellenic names are transliterated directly from Hellenic, inasmuch as their Latinate form in English is considered aberrant (cf. Caragounis, *The Development of Greek and the New Testament*, pp. 12–13).

The aspiration, although it was used very erratically in classical Athens, and was altogether missing in the other dialects, is here retained, not because it is correct but in order not to render the Hellenic names or words completely unintelligible.

The transliteration is as follows:

η = ē

ω = ō

υ = y

αυ before β, γ, δ, ζ, λ, μ, ν, ρ = av; before other consonants = au

ευ before β, γ, δ, ζ, λ, μ, ν, ρ = ev; before other consonants = eu

ηυ before β, γ, δ, ζ, λ, μ, ν, ρ = ēv; before other consonants = ēu

ου = ou

γγ = ⁿg

γκ = g

γχ = ⁿch

γξ = ⁿx

Introduction

The Book of Revelation is a maverick in the New Testament. The New Testament does not have another book like it. This fact intrigued my interest and I set myself as the main areas for my investigation: the question of the identity of the author, the contents of the book as a whole, and its message, concentrating in particular on a topic that is completely uncharacteristic of the rest of the New Testament, namely, the Thousand-year reign of Christ on earth. I have not paid any detailed attention to the first three chapters, because my interest lay outside the particular messages that were sent to the seven churches of the province of Asia. Instead, I have concentrated on the second part (chs. 4–22) and on the claim of the author in 4:1 to have received divine revelation appertaining to the future: “Come up here and I will show you what must happen hereafter.”

The first question I address is the question of the authorship of Revelation. A number of minuscule manuscripts, and generally the Byzantine or the Majority Text-form¹ bear the inscription “The Revelation of John the Divine”² with an uncial and a minuscule – both of the tenth century³ – adding “and Evangelist.”⁴ Thereby the question of the authorship of Revelation was sealed at least for the Eastern Church. Consequently, editions of the Tyndale, KJV and the RV have normally borne the title “The Revelation of St John the Divine,” with Rheims bearing the title “The Apocalypse of St. John the Apostle,” whereas modern translations have dispensed with the phrase “St John the Divine,” etc., leaving the question of authorship open. This change with respect to the title of the Apocalypse adumbrates the stance of modern scholarship to the problem of authorship.

To determine the question of authorship it is necessary to delve primarily into two areas: (a) the external evidence and (b) the internal evidence. The external evidence consists of witnesses relevant to the subject from the earliest times possible. If such witnesses take us back to the time of the author or of his immediate disciples, and such witnesses are found to be above all suspicion and their testimony is shown to be reliable, we have a *prima facie* presumption for accepting their testimony. The internal evidence refers to information that the book supplies with regard to: (i) its historical setting, (ii) statements that can be related to contemporary history, (iii) the contents of the book, (iv) the investigation of the

1 Such as 1006, 1841, 2329, 2351 and 38.

2 Αποκάλυψις Ιωάννου τοῦ θεολόγου.

3 I.e. uncial 046 and minuscule 1611.

4 καὶ εὐαγγελιστοῦ.

language, style and diction of the book, and (v) the importance of comparison in questions of language, grammar and style with another book of the assumed author, if there is one. Fortunately, in this case we are in the happy position to have the Gospel of John and, if need be, also the First Epistle of John. These texts are sufficient to compare with the Book of Revelation in order to establish affinities or dissimilarities between them as well as the degree of affinity or dissimilarity. Finally, if the internal and external evidences diverge, a weighing of the external *vis à vis* the internal evidence will be necessary in order to see which side preponderates. Needless to say, the scholarly arguments and counter-arguments relevant to the question are quite likely to have something to contribute and should, therefore, be taken into consideration.

In the following I shall explain the questions that I intend to take up and the way in which the discussion is to be carried out.

Chapter one, “The Author of Revelation,” takes up the external and the internal evidence bearing on the question of the authorship of Revelation. With regard to the external evidence, it is well-known that the ancient Christian leaders were divided. A large number of important Christian authors accepted the Johannine authorship of Revelation and an equally large number of Christian leaders took exception to it. It is therefore necessary to weigh the reasons or arguments of these ancient witnesses of both sides in order to establish the real weight each carries in the issue at hand. This is important because this is not merely a question of how many witnesses support the one or the other position, but of how valid the arguments of each side are.

With regard to the internal evidence, an attempt will be made to evaluate the language of the Book, that is, its lexical forms and its syntactical constructions. This will be carried out by taking up a large number of constructions representing each chapter of Revelation. This will eliminate the risk of drawing any conclusions on a limited amount of text, which might be interpreted as prone to a specific vocabulary. In this way it will be possible to ascertain the literary level of diction and style in the book as a whole. The syntactical constructions of Revelation will be judged in the light of what is correct syntax in Hellenic grammar in general as well as against the backdrop of the Gospel of John or the First Epistle of John.

The evidence that emerges from the external and internal investigations will be considered sufficient to arrive at a decision concerning the authorship of Revelation.

The second chapter will be concerned with the literary genre of the Book of Revelation. To begin with, the author calls his book a “prophecy”. This may be understood in the Old Testament sense of prophecy, that is, in a more restricted sense of foretelling or in the New Testament sense, which seems to carry more the sense of forthtelling. Here we must not forget that apocalyptic authors, too, were in the habit of calling their books “prophecy.” It is, therefore, of vital importance to

determine in how far the concerns of his book are similar to the prophetic books of the Old Testament or of the New Testament or perchance deal with such themes as those that characterize apocalyptic works. The question, then, is: Is this book a prophecy or an apocalypse? A comparison between Revelation and Jewish works of the past ought no doubt to shed light on the problem at hand.

The third chapter, "The Contents and Structure of Revelation," will present the contents and structure of Revelation each in the form of a list. The part dealing with the contents will present a fairly detailed list of all the main items that make up the contents of the book, whereas the second part, the structure, will attempt to show the internal relations of the various items to one another, in order to present a clearer picture of the structure and concerns of the book.

The fourth chapter, "Some of the Bearing Concepts of Revelation," will be occupied with a number of central themes of Revelation. These are considered to be the chief items on which the entire edifice rests or the main blocks of material that compose the book. These central themes, on the one hand, divulge the concerns of the book, and on the other, betray the traditional themes utilized, both of which reveal the kind of book with which we have to do and the kind of message it carries. The chapter will take up fourteen subjects: "The One like a Son of man," "The twenty-four presbyters," "The four living beings," "The lamb," "The seven seals," "The seven trumpets," "The seven bowls," "The two women," "The beasts," "The interpretation of the seven kings and the eighth king," "The mark of the beast," "The number of the beast," "The numerical figures of Revelation" and the "Armagedōn." The above items are considered to belong to the most important themes of Revelation, which, in their totality, divulge the purpose of the author and the concerns of his book. Each of these themes will be discussed in some detail against the background of identical or similar concepts that occur in the Old Testament, in the New Testament, in the Apocrypha and in the Pseudepigrapha. These investigations, it is hoped, will contribute to a better understanding of the overall picture of Revelation as well as of its purpose and message.

Chapter five, "The Eschatology of Jesus and Paul Compared with that of Revelation," will seek to evaluate the eschatology of Revelation by comparing it with the eschatology of other New Testament writings. The areas relevant in this connection are the eschatological discourse of Jesus, according to the synoptic tradition (Mt 24–25, Mk 13 and Lk 21) and the brief discussion of Paul in 1 Corinthians 15, as well as the more extended discussions in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4 and 2 Thessalonians chapter 2. A comparison between Jesus' eschatology as reported by the synoptists and Paul's eschatology ought to show eventual affinities or dissimilarities before the two are compared with the eschatology of Revelation. Finally, a comparison of the eschatology of Revelation with Jesus' and Paul's eschatology ought to be of significance in revealing the theological stance of our author in these important questions in the life and future hope of the Early Church. This

should, at the same time, indicate in how far this book was within the general stream of the eschatological expectations of Early Christianity or deviated from it.

Chapter six, “The Thousand-Year Reign of Christ on Earth,” will concentrate on the statement in Rev 20 that after binding Satan for a thousand years, Christ with his beheaded saints will reign on earth for the same period of time. Biblical students from very early times have held widely different views about the very likelihood of an earthly millennium, let alone its details. The discussion here will address the biblical bases for a millennium beginning with Hebrew-Jewish views of such a period of bliss and the Old Testament passages on which such a belief might be based. Following this, the apocalyptic works that entertain hopes for such a period of bliss will be inquired into. Thereafter, an exegesis of the relevant text in Rev 20 will follow, and finally, this will be compared with analogous teachings in the rest of the New Testament in order to discover affinities or dissimilarities on this point between Revelation and the other writings of the New Testament.

Chapter seven, “Parallel Passages between Revelation and the Rest of the New Testament, the Old Testament and the Jewish Apocryphal-pseudepigraphic Literature,” will be concerned with three lists in parallel columns: the first list will be between Revelation and the rest of the New Testament, the second, between Revelation and the Old Testament and the third, between Revelation and the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha. The reason for these lists is the view put forward that Revelation without quoting *verbatim* echoes many passages from the Old Testament and that moreover “without a knowledge of the Pseudepigrapha it would be impossible to understand our author.”⁵ These lists are of importance, therefore, for the purpose of showing to what extent Revelation is dependent upon previous literature both biblical and extra-biblical and to what extent it contains the author’s original ideas.

The final chapter, “The Supra-historical Relevance of the Apocalypse,” taking into consideration the results of the previous chapters, will seek to investigate the essence and message of the Book of Revelation. This will be done first by reminding ourselves of the crucial results of the previous discussions. The question of authorship and the self-understanding of the author are important for the kind of book he intended to produce. By calling his book *apocalypsis* (Rev 1:1), he has given away the nature of his book. It is, therefore, necessary to investigate the genre of the book as well as the nature of apocalyptic, to which it belongs.

This, at once, leads us to the Book of Daniel and his followers. In his presentation and interpretation of the four beasts, Daniel introduced the concept of supra-history. That is the reason why Daniel does not treat the various beasts/kingsdoms from the purely historical point of view. Instead, he brings in the cat-

5 CHARLES, *Revelation*, I. p. lxxv.

egory of supra-history, according to which things are seen and evaluated from an other-worldly point of view, a point of view that can best be served by 'mythological' language. To prove this, it will be necessary to investigate how Daniel deals with his material and on the basis of which criteria he makes his judgments. Here, the current identifications of the four empires are shown by means of historical facts from Near Eastern and Hellenic sources to be mistaken. For example, the fourth beast/kingdom has been identified with the empire of Alexander, on account of his superior military power. My discussion will show that this is a mistake. What was so different with Alexander was that he was bringing a new culture, a new education, a new way of thinking and outlook, a new approach to the higher powers – things that were squarely opposed to the cultures and religion of the peoples of the Near East. Moreover, the dynamic way of perceiving the kingdoms, especially the fourth one, was of crucial importance in interpreting the fourth kingdom by *4 Ezra* and Revelation no longer of Alexander's empire but of the Roman empire.

This supra-historical perspective permeates the works of the apocalypstists, who sought to bring to their readers another reality, a world hidden from the eyes of men and seen only by such as had been chosen to become recipients of special revelations. This will be exemplified by quotes from e.g. *1 Enoch*, *4 Ezra* and *the Sibylline Oracles*, although these books are not the only ones that utilize supra-history.

This, finally, will lead us to a discussion of supra-history in Revelation. This will be done by a detailed survey of Rev 4–22. Practically every paragraph of these chapters will be taken up. It will become evident that the descriptions, approached as ordinary narratives defy understanding. What is said or stated lies beyond human experience: it sounds strange, bizzare, downright weird. The reason is that the author is not describing history but supra-history.

The central theme of Revelation is the Roman empire. But the author does not present the Roman empire as a historian would. Informed by his supra-history, he presents and evaluates it accordingly. He seeks to bear upon his presentation and interpretation criteria from another world; his evaluations are based on his visionary experiences. And although his commerce is with the Roman empire of his day, the arcane presentation of it is bewildering to his interpreters, because it is apocalyptically and supra-historically presented.

The chapter will close with an overall evaluation of the book and its abiding relevance. The author wanted to look beyond history, to the causes behind the earthly events. He wanted to describe a spiritual battle that is going on in the heavenlies. To do this, apocalyptic, which had been used so successfully in times past, was the best method available to him. Since his descriptions and evaluations are other-worldly, he uses imageries that are grotesque, pictures and symbols that are foreign to human experience. These should neither be interpreted literally nor

should they be rejected off hand. They have a message: sin is very ugly. In the final analysis, sin is opposition to God's will. Man has been cheated into it by evil spiritual powers, which seeks to destroy God's creation. Evil will increase, until there is no escape. Then God will intervene. He will destroy the old world and create a new world of righteousness and bliss. The wicked will be damned, while the righteous will enter into everlasting happiness.

Chapter One

The Author of Revelation

The author of the Book of Revelation calls himself John (Rev 1:1, 4, 9; 22:8). The Book has thus a real historical person as its author, which precludes its being a pseudepigraphic work, since pseudepigraphic works were ascribed to famous persons who had lived long ago,¹ in order to give them status and authority. In Christian tradition all the way to the present, this “John” has often been identified with the beloved disciple of Jesus, the brother of James and son of Zebedee, who was one of the twelve apostles and composed the Gospel of John and the First Epistle of John.

But already in ancient times there were dissenting voices about the apostolic authorship of this book and such voices have multiplied in modern times. Hence, it is incumbent on me to begin my inquiry by addressing this very question. The evidence relevant to this question falls into two areas: the external evidence and the internal evidence. The external evidence is connected with the testimony of ancient authorities: Christian leaders who had lived close to the date of the writing of the book. *A priori*, their testimony ought to be considered important, but whether it turns out to be so or not is pending upon the investigation. The second type of evidence, the internal evidence, involves the investigation of the language of Revelation. This means that my inquiry will address questions of grammar, syntax, diction and style and try to evaluate these in the light of what is proper in Hellenic grammar and how it compares with, for example, the Gospel of John or the First Epistle of John.

1. The External Evidence

In the ancient church, the ascription of Revelation to John the Apostle was not universally acknowledged. The Book of Revelation, along with a number of other New Testament books, was rejected by many Christian leaders, though, it would appear that a great number of other Christian leaders accepted it as the work of

1 For example, the Old Testament pseudepigraphic Books of *Adam and Eve*, *1 Enoch*, the *Testament of Abraham*, the *Assumption of Moses*, the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, the *Martyrdom of Isaiah*, *2 Baruch*, the *Ezra Apocalypse* (= *4 Ezra*), etc. etc. as well as such apocryphal works as are falsely ascribed to New Testament persons as the *Gospel of Peter*, the *Gospel of Thomas*, the *Gospel of Mary*, the *Gospel of Philip*, the *Apocalypse of Peter*, the *Apocalypse of Paul* and many others.

John the Apostle. In his *Greek Testament*,² Henry Alford cites some 22 ancient Christian authors and Church Fathers, who thought of John the Apostle as the author of Revelation.³

Alford presents also (pp. 209 ff.) another list of ancient authorities, which did not accept apostolic authorship for the Book of Revelation.⁴ This ambivalence in

2 ALFORD, H., *The Greek Testament, with a Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, in 4 volumes, here Vol. IV, pp. 198–209.

3 I.e. Justinus (fl. 139–161) in his *Dialogue*; Melitōn, bishop of Sardeis († 180) acc. to Eusebios *Ecclesiastical History* IV.26; Theophilos, bishop of Antioch († 183–85); Apollōnios bishop [?] of Ephesos (fl. 180–210) acc. to Eusebios, *Ecclesiastical History* V.18; Eirēnaios, the Hellenic bishop of Lyon, France (fl. 180), in his *Adversus Haereses*; Tertullian (fl. 220) in several of his works; *Canon Muratori* (c. 190); Hippolytos (c.170–235), in e.g. *De antichristo*, 36; Klēmēs of Alexandria (150–215) in e.g. *Strōmateis* IV.13 [106]; Ōrigenēs (c. 185–253), *Commentary on Matthew* [in Eusebios, *Ecclesiastical History* VI. 25]; Victorinus of Pettau († 303), who has written the earliest extant commentary on Revelation; Ephraim Syros († 378) in several of his writings accepts the Apostle John as the author of Revelation; *Peshitto* [Transl. of New Testament in Syriac] probably contained Revelation; Epiphanius of Kypros (c. 320–403), cites Revelation against those who rejected John's presentation of Christ as the Logos [cf. John 1:1]; Basileios the Great († 378), *Against Eunomios*, II.14; Hilary of Poitiers (310–367), *Prologue to the Psalms*; Athanasios (c. 296–373), in his *Easter letter to the priests of Egypt*; Grēgorios of Nyssa (c. 335–395) refers to Rev 3:15 as the work of John the Apostle; Didymos (c. 313–398); Ambrosios, bishop of Milan (c. 339–397); Augustinus (354–430), in many writings acknowledges the Apostle John as the author of Revelation and finally Hieronymos (c. 342–347–420), though both Augustinus and Hieronymos rejected the 1,000-year reign of Christ on earth.

4 The *Alogoi* (II cent.) (= Christians who did not accept John's presentation of Christ as Logos) in their argumentation against the ecstatic/prophetic movement of Montanism, ascribing Revelation to the gnostic heretic Kērinthos (50–100); Gaius of Rome (early III cent.) (acc. to Eusebios, *Ecclesiastical History* III.28), who, too, ascribed the Revelation to Kērinthos; Hippolytos (c.170–235) (later phase), Dionysios, bishop of Alexandria († 264) acc. to Eusebios, *Ecclesiastical History* ?, see below; Eusebios, bishop of Caesarea (260/265–339) is somewhat ambivalent, though he cautiously ascribed Revelation to John, an elder of the Church of Ephesus, in his *Ecclesiastical History*, III.39; Kyrillos, bishop of Jerusalem († 386), *Catechesis* IV.35; The *Canons of Laodicea* (343–384): Canon 60 omit Revelation and Grēgorios of Nazianzos (329–390) accepts *Canons of Laodicea*, saying that books not included in them [among which is also Revelation] are not genuine; In *Iambi ad Seleucum* either Grēgorios or more probably Amphilochios, bishop of Ikonion (339/340–394–403), state that Revelation is rejected by most Christian leaders; Chrysostomos († 407), who wrote commentaries on most of the New Testament books and on a number of Old Testament books, appears not to have written a commentary on Revelation, and Theodōros, bishop of Mopsouestia (350–428) never cited Revelation in his works; Theodōrētos of Kyrros (393–458/466) does not mention Revelation even in his *Commentary on Daniel*. To this list may be added, according to W.G. KÜMMEL, *Introduction to the New Testament*, p. 350) “the three Cappadocians (Basileios the Great (329/330–379), Grēgorios of Nyssa (313–395) and Grēgorios of Nazianzos (329–390); one list of the Quinixestine Council (A.D. 692); the Stichometry of Nikēphoros (IX cent.) and the fact that until Late Byzantine times only a small number of New Testament manuscripts contained the Book of Revelation, while such manuscripts as contain the

the acceptance on non-acceptance of Revelation by the Early Church is reflected in the slow and hesitant admittance of the Book into the New Testament Canon.

The history of the New Testament Canon begins with 2 Pt 3:15f., where the author speaks of Paul's letters as "Scripture", placing them on the same level as the Old Testament, while the first author to speak of a "New Testament" was Eirēnaïos.⁵

In the early centuries of the Church, various Christian leaders had made collections of New Testament books, which they treated more or less as their Canon. The first person to do so was the heretic Markiōn, who in 144 separated himself from the Church in Rome. His Canon consisted of the Gospel of Luke together with ten letters of Paul (excluding the Pastorals), from all of which he had removed everything that smacked of Judaizing ideas.

Justinus accepted all four Gospels as well as "the memoirs of the apostles". In Rome, the so-called *Canon Muratori* (c. 190 A.D.) contained 22 books of the New Testament omitting Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, and 3 John, but including the Old Testament apocryphon, the book of *Wisdom*, and the New Testament apocryphon, the *Apocalypse of Peter*.

Others who had made lists of canonical New Testament books included Ōri-genēs, who accepted all of the present New Testament books except 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John and Jude. Eusebios' Canon excluded 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John as well as Jude,⁶ and expressed doubts about the Revelation, while the Canon of Kyrillos of Jerusalem accepted all the books in our New Testament except the Book of Revelation. Grēgorios Nazianzēnos's Canon, likewise, excluded the Book of Revelation. Further, the so-called *Apostolic Canon 85* excluded the Book of Revelation in place of which it included the *Letters of Clement* of Rome as well as the *Apostolic Constitutions*. As for John Chrysostomos, his attitude to Revelation may perhaps be concluded from the following fact: from his pen, according to the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae: Canon of Greek Authors*, are extant some 500 works, among which, commentaries not only on most of the New Testament books, but even on some Old Testament books, yet a commentary on the Book of Revelation is signally absent!

Book of Revelation present its text either as part of a commentary or together with non-biblical books (so KÜMMEL, *Introduction*, p. 350). KÜMMEL concludes: "Thus we can say that the number of twenty-seven canonical writings of the NT did not finally prevail in the Greek Church till about the tenth century" (*op. cit.* p. 350).

5 Eirēnaïos, *Adversus Haereses*, IV.9,1; see further KELLY, *Early Christian Doctrines*, p. 56. The use of 'New Testament' as a collection of books that we meet in Eirēnaïos was, no doubt, based on the prior argument of Hebrews chapters 8 and 9 as well as 10:16 and 12:24 but especially on 8:13: "When he speaks of New [Testament] it is obvious that he has made the first one Old [Testament]." The meaning of "Old" in this context is "obsolete;" however, the Hellenic original text by using the terms "New" and "Old" determined for all future time the designation of the two parts of the Bible: the 'Old Testament' and the 'New Testament.'

6 See Eusebios, *Ecclesiastical History*, III.xxv.1–2.

Thus, for several hundred years the Church (later: Hellenic East and Latin West) recognized different collections of books, or as it might be expressed more correctly, each area had its own collection of books. In the meantime there were exchanges of views between them but no uniformity of opinion was forthcoming. Finally, the long discussion as to what should or should not be included in the New Testament was effectively brought to an end when Athanasios, bishop of Alexandria, in his Easter letter of 367 to the priests of Egypt, listed exactly the same 27 books that comprise the New Testament today. The status that Athanasios enjoyed, not least on account of his role at the Council of Nicea and the Niceno(-Constantinopolitan) Creed, led the one church after the other to gradually accept his judgement.

The above brief discussion has indicated the long struggle that the Book of Revelation engaged in in order to be accepted within the Canon of the New Testament, especially in the East. It was, in fact, many centuries after 367 that that struggle came to an end, and Revelation came to be generally regarded by both East and West as part of the New Testament.

The above data underline the remarkable fact that the authenticity of Revelation was questioned by some of the greatest profiles of the Early Church, although equally great profiles accepted its authenticity. On the other hand, what is surprising in all this is the fact that those who accepted the genuineness of the Book of Revelation did so on the basis of tradition, that is, that it was handed down as a book written by John the Apostle and not by any investigation into its genuineness. The ultimate source of this tradition seems to have been Papias, (60–130), bishop of Hierapolis in Phrygia, Asia Minor.

For example, in accepting as apostolic the Book of Revelation, Eirēnaios based his decision solely on the evidence of Papias. Papias' works are all lost. We possess only fragments of his works in authors such as Eirēnaios and Eusebios. What Papias (according to Eusebios, *Ecclesiastic History* III.39,4) says, is:

Εἰ δέ που καὶ παρηκολουθηκώς τις τοῖς πρεσβυτέροις ἔλθοι, τοὺς τῶν πρεσβυτέρων ἀνέκρινον λόγους· τί Ἀνδρέας ἢ τί Πέτρος εἶπεν ἢ τί Φίλιππος ἢ τί Θωμᾶς ἢ Ἰάκωβος ἢ τί Ἰωάννης ἢ Ματθαῖος ἢ τις ἕτερος τῶν τοῦ κυρίου μαθητῶν, ἃ τε Ἀριστίων καὶ ὁ πρεσβύτερος Ἰωάννης, τοῦ κυρίου μαθηταί, λέγουσιν.⁷

7 "But if ever anyone came who had attended [the teaching] of the presbyters, I inquired into the words of the presbyters, what Andrew or Peter or Philip or Thomas or James or John or Matthew, or any other of the Lord's disciples, had said, and what Aristiōn and the presbyter John, the Lord's disciples, were saying. This statement of Papias contradicts GUTHRIE's claim (*New Testament Introduction*, Vol. III, p. 266) that "a second John at Ephesus" was not witnessed by Papias.

Eirēnaios mistakenly took this to mean that Papias had been a disciple of the apostle John:

Ταῦτα δὲ καὶ Παπίας ὁ Ἰωάννου μὲν ἀκουστής, Πολυκάρπου δὲ ἐταῖρος γεγονώς, ἀρχαῖος ἀνὴρ, ἐγγράφως ἐπιμαρτυρεῖ.⁸

and hence he thought that his acceptance of the Book of Revelation was based on first-hand knowledge. Taking up Eirēnaios' mistake, Eusebios pointed out:

Καὶ ὁ μὲν Εἰρηναῖος ταῦτα. αὐτός γε μὴν ὁ Παπίας κατὰ τὸ προοίμιον τῶν αὐτοῦ λόγων ἀκροατὴν μὲν καὶ αὐτόπτην οὐδαμῶς ἑαυτὸν γενέσθαι τῶν ἱερῶν ἀποστόλων ἐμφαίνει, παρελθόντων δὲ τὰ τῆς πίστεως παρὰ τῶν ἐκείνοις γνωρίμων διδάσκει.⁹

Eusebios refers to Papias' own words (in his *Ecclesiastical History* III. 39,3):

Οὐκ ὀκνήσω δέ σοι καὶ ὅσα ποτὲ παρὰ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων καλῶς ἔμαθον καὶ καλῶς ἐμνημόνευσα, συγκατατάξαι ταῖς ἐρμηνείαις.¹⁰

And then, in reference to the above quoted text, he says:

Ἐνθα καὶ ἐπιστῆσαι ἄξιον δις καταριθμοῦντι αὐτῷ τὸ Ἰωάννου ὄνομα, ὧν τὸν μὲν πρότερον Πέτρῳ καὶ Ἰακώβῳ καὶ Ματθαίῳ καὶ τοῖς λοιποῖς ἀποστόλοις συγκαταλέγει, σαφῶς δηλῶν τὸν εὐαγγελιστὴν, τὸν δ' ἕτερον Ἰωάννην, διαστείλας τὸν λόγον, ἑτέροις παρὰ τὸν τῶν ἀποστόλων ἀριθμὸν κατατάσσει, προτάξας αὐτοῦ τὸν Ἀριστίωνα, σαφῶς τε αὐτὸν πρεσβύτερον ὀνομάζει· ὥς καὶ διὰ τούτων ἀποδείκνυσθαι τὴν ἱστορίαν ἀληθῆ τῶν δύο κατὰ τὴν Ἀσίαν ὁμωνυμία κεχρησθαι εἰρηκότων δύο τε ἐν Ἐφέσῳ γενέσθαι μνήματα καὶ ἑκάτερον Ἰωάννου ἔτι νῦν λέγεσθαι. οἷς καὶ ἀναγκαῖον προσέχειν τὸν νοῦν, εἰκὸς γάρ τὸν δεύτερον, εἰ μὴ τις ἐθέλοι τὸν πρῶτον, τὴν ἐπ' ὀνόματος φερομένην Ἰωάννου ἀποκάλυψιν ἑορακεῖν.¹¹

8 Eirēnaios, *Adversus Haereses*, Frg. 95: "About these things also Papias, a hearer of John and companion of Polycarp, a man of ancient times, bears witness in writing." Similarly Ἀναστάσιος Συναΐτης (VI–VII cent.) in his work on Ἑρμηνεῖα εἰς ἑξαήμερον.

9 Eusebios, *Ecclesiastical History* III. xxxix.2: "This is what Eirēnaios says. However, Papias himself in the preface of his treatise never claims to have been a hearer and an eyewitness of the holy Apostles, but to have received the articles of faith from those who were acquainted with them."

10 "I shall not hesitate to add to my interpretations whatever I learned well from the presbyters and kept well in my memory."

11 Eusebios, *Ecclesiastical History* III. xxxix.5–6: "It is worth pointing out here that he (i.e. Papias) counts the name of John twice, and reckons the first John with Peter and James and Matthew and the other Apostles, clearly meaning the evangelist, but by varying his statement, he places the second with the others outside the Apostles, setting Aristion before him and clearly calling him