

SEMITIC LITERARY FORMS IN THE APOCALYPSE AND THEIR IMPORT

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FUNDAMENTAL problems concerning the Apocalypse are still under discussion and are far from being settled: Is the Apocalypse a collection of fragments of various sources with hardly an element of union between them, as the so-called critics (Erbes, Völter, et al.) maintained, or a book arranged with a most perfect disposition of parts, as, in reaction to the former, modern scholars (e.g., Allo, Lohmeyer) hold? What is its plan and division? Does it contain prophecies of the actual development of the Church? Our present essay deals exclusively with literary forms in the Apocalypse, but it may be somewhat helpful in the solution of these problems.

I. SEMITIC LITERARY FORMS

R. H. Charles has given us the most penetrating treatise on the language of the Apocalypse, ending with the general verdict that "while he [the author] writes in Greek, he thinks in Hebrew."¹ It would be surprising if his Semitic mind had left its impress only on the language and phrases, and not on the literary form of the book as a whole or at least on its parts. In fact, we discover Semitic literary forms all through the Apocalypse. By Semitic literary forms we mean forms used in the Old Testament and in Semitic works contemporary with the Apocalypse, but not in classical Greek works.

The Heptads

The most obvious Semitic literary form in the Apocalypse is the arrangement of certain sections according to the sacred number seven. They are well known but, in my opinion, have not always found the attention which they deserve.

Examples of arrangements in heptads are the Gospel of St. Matthew with its opening section, five sections characterized by the great ser-

¹ R. H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John* (*The International Critical Commentary*, Edinburgh: Clark, 1920, I, cxliii).

mons, and the concluding section,² and in the Old Testament the Song of Songs.³ Of works contemporary with the Apocalypse, the Apocalypse of Esra is clearly divided into a triplet of signs, a triplet of visions, and a final part with commandments; the whole an arrangement in seven.⁴ Certain parts of this Apocalypse have a more immediate bearing on our subject. It enumerates seven degrees of condemnation, each beginning with the formula "the first degree . . ." and seven grades of beatitude with the formula "the first grade. . ."⁵ In another passage the author deals one by one with seven names of God.⁶ In the somewhat later Apocalypse of Baruch, Violet discovered a dirge arranged in seven stanzas.⁷ These instances may serve to prove that the heptad is a Semitic literary form.

In St. John's Apocalypse the seven letters to the Churches occur first (cc. 2-3). It is no accident that they are all alike in form. Their likeness is an unmistakable sign that either their author, or he to whom we owe their insertion into the Apocalypse, was a Semite with a markedly Semitic literary taste, who chose seven items of a similar nature and combined them by inserting into each some identical word, phrase, or sentence. These sentences are the introductory sentence and the two concluding ones. By the latter the author at the time divided the seven into a group of three and four. In the first three, the sentence, "He that has an ear . . ." is followed by the sentence, "To him that overcomes . . .," whereas in the last four letters the order is reversed.

Next follow the seven seals (5:1-8:1). Three times the "seven seals" are mentioned (5:1, 5; 6:1) and then they are enumerated one by

² Hermann Cladder, S. J., *Unsere Evangelien* (Freiburg i.Br.: Herder, 1919), pp. 51-57; Paul Gaechter, S. J., *Summa Introductionis in Novum Testamentum* (Oeniponte: Rauch, 1938), pp. 44-45.

³ Seven parts are recognized in the Song of Songs by Gietmann, Bousset, Buzy, but differently figured out. The most probable division is the following: Introduction 1:2-4; first song 1:5-2:7; second song 2:8-17; third song 3:1-5; fourth song 3:6-4:7; fifth song 4:8-5:1; sixth song 5:2-6:10; seventh song 6:11-8:4; conclusion 8:5-7a. The remainder is a collection of partially poetic, partially prose fragments. Each song supposes a different setting.

⁴ Bruno Violet, *Die Apokalypsen des Esra und des Baruch in deutscher Gestalt (Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte)*, Leipzig, Hinrichs, 1924), pp. ix-xi and xli.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 90-91; 91-93.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 102-5.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 214-20.

one, "the first, second, . . . seventh seal." Their series is even more clearly divided into $4 + 3$ than the seven letters, because the visions inaugurated by the first four seals, and only they, show horsemen and are of a similar structure, which is different from that of the rest of the seals. What strikes the reader as odd is the dissimilarity of content of the fifth seal, as compared with the others from one to six, and that the seventh is apparently without its content. To this point we shall return later.

The seven seals are immediately followed by the seven trumpets (8:2-11:18 or 19). As a group they are mentioned twice (8:2, 6), whereafter the stereotyped formula introduces each of them: "And the first, second, . . . seventh angel sounded the trumpet." This series, too, is divided into $4 + 3$. The flourishes of the first four trumpets bring plagues which are recounted in a similar literary form while the last three are identified with the three woes (8:13; 9:12; 11:14).

Then, at a considerable distance from the trumpets there is the last group of seven, the seven bowls (cc. 15-16). "The seven bowls" are twice spoken of in the prelude to their detailed description (15:7; 16:1), and referred to incidentally twice in later parts of the Apocalypse (17:1; 21:9). Besides, their number seven is enhanced by the triple mention of "the seven [last] plagues" (15:1, 6, 8) and the fourfold mention of "the seven angels" holding the bowls (15:1, 6, 7, 8; 16:1). Again, each bowl is introduced by the identical phrase, "And the first, second, . . . seventh angel poured out his bowl." In contrast to the other three heptads (letters, seals, trumpets), this fourth is not divided into groups of three and four by repeated terms or formulae, but in another no less Semitic way, as we shall see presently.

Before we inquire into their grouping, a minor operation on the text is suggested by a certain quite obvious disarrangement. The effect of the first bowl is described by the words, "And it became a noisome and grievous *sore* upon men" (16:2), while in the fifth bowl we read: "And the fifth [angel] poured out his bowl upon the throne of the beast; and his kingdom became darkened" (v. 10). The effect of this on men is most surprising: "And men gnawed their tongues for *pain*; and they blasphemed the God in heaven because of their *pains* and their *sores*; yet they did not repent of their doings" (v. 11). It stands

to reason that the pains have something to do with the sores, but nothing whatever with the darkening of the throne of the beast. Charles surmises that after the darkening "several clauses have been lost."⁸ This is very probable. The lacuna has been filled up by a piece which originally was meant to complete the description of the first bowl, which caused "a noisome and grievous sore." We therefore suggest that v. 11 be regarded as misplaced, originally being a continuation of v. 2. This transposition is not of great importance to our purpose of finding out the structure of the seven bowls, but it will help to make it somewhat clearer.

We must also remark 16:13-16. Verse 15 ("Behold, I come like a thief. . .") is intelligible by itself, if not in its connection with the bowls, whereas vv. 13-14 with v. 16 remain a fragment which is linked up with the sixth bowl as a catchword rather than as an *associatio idearum*. Verse 12 mentions "the kings [who come] from [the land of] the sunrise," with whom correspond, although essentially differing, "the kings of the whole world" in v. 14. Although v. 15 looks like an intrusion into vv. 13-16, the possibility cannot be ruled out that it holds its rightful place, while vv. 13-14 and 16 are misplaced. The development of the passage seems to have been this: first, vv. 13-14 and 16 have been put where we read them, but by mistake; then the proper v. 15 was added on the margin of the text, and subsequently taken up into it without properly replacing vv. 13-14 and 16.

Charles brackets v. 15 as misplaced and originally standing between 3:3a and 3b, or after 3:17;⁹ he combines vv. 12, 13-14 and 16 as best he can. Allo contends that there are two quite different groups, the kings from the East and the kings of the whole world.¹⁰ We cannot recommend his exegesis. The reason for distinguishing the two groups of kings lies in the rules of writing a story reasonably; and these rules require that, if the author intended from the outset to pass from the Parthian kings (from the East) to all the kings of the earth, he should somehow indicate that he considered the former as the vanguard of the latter; then Allo would be right. As this is not the case, we have here an evident example of secondary patchwork; this the

⁸ *Op. cit.*, II, 45.

⁹ *Op. cit.*, II, 49.

¹⁰ E.-B. Allo, O. P., *Saint Jean, L'Apocalypse* (Paris, Gabalda, 1921), p. 238.

passage would be considered in any other literary product. However, neither v. 11 nor 13-16, left in their actual place, would alter the literary structure of chapter 16. It is the following:

- first bowl (16:2)—people blaspheming (v. 11)
- second bowl (v. 3)
- third bowl (v. 4)
 - praise of God (vv. 5-7)
- fourth bowl (v. 8)—people blaspheming (v. 9)
- fifth bowl (v. 10)
- sixth bowl (v. 12)
 - warning to vigilance ([vv. 13-14] v. 15 [v. 16])
- seventh bowl (vv. 17-21a)—people blaspheming (v. 21bc).

There is no need to say much about this form. We content ourselves with submitting for comparison Matthew, chapter 13, as it exhibits the very same structure, only in a reversed order:

- first parable (13:4-9)
 - purpose of parables; explanation (vv. 10-23)
- second parable (vv. 24-30)
- third parable (vv. 31-32)
- fourth parable (v. 33)
 - purpose of parables; explanation of second parable (vv. 34-43)
- fifth parable (v. 44)
- sixth parable (vv. 45-46)
- seventh parable (vv. 47-50)
 - concluding word (vv. 51-52).

In both passages there is a division of similar matter by means of inserted different matter, so that there results a grouping of 3 + 3 + 1 or 1 + 3 + 3 respectively.

Numerical Symmetry

There is yet another section in the Apocalypse where seven elements are arranged in a numerical pattern, 14:6-20; this section therefore might be added to the heptads seen heretofore. But it has a peculiarity which puts it into a category by itself: it is arranged so that the fourth part as the most prominent one figures as the center round which the rest are grouped. It is therefore more the principle of symmetry than that of seven which governs it. This disposition has not been noticed

by Bousset,¹¹ Charles,¹² or Zahn,¹³ who divide 14:6-20 into vv. 6-13 and 14-20, except that Charles declares vv. 15-17 to be interpolated; otherwise they say nothing about the form that comprises both these parts. Swete gives the same division, but speaks of the three angels in vv. 15-20 as the fourth, fifth, and sixth "in this context."¹⁴ Only Allo and Hadorn have seen the whole form. Allo speaks of "the seven heavenly personages"; John combines two pieces, vv. 6-13 and 14-20 so that they are arranged—seven in all—in groups of three and four.¹⁵ This observation is correct in that the fourth person, as regards the ideas, forms part of the second piece; but the figure of the arrangement has not been fully seized by Allo. Hadorn has more completely recognized it. There are three angels, the Son of Man, three angels—¹⁶ a group of seven arranged round a central figure. We best show the arrangement in this schematic form:

- v. 6: "And I saw another angel flying in mid heaven"
- v. 8: "And another, a second angel, followed saying"
- v. 9: "And another angel, a third, followed them saying" (12-13)
- v. 14: "And I saw, and behold, a white cloud,
and on the cloud one seated like unto a Son of Man"
- v. 15: "And another angel went forth from the temple"
- v. 17: "And another angel went forth from the temple"
- v. 18: "And another angel went forth from the altar"

We agree with Charles, that vv. 12-13 have no bearing whatever on the context, and are misplaced—not the only piece of that kind in the Apocalypse. The general structure of the section strongly supports this view, because these verses somewhat disturb the otherwise perfect Semitic form. Examples may show that it was a familiar one with Semitic writers.

¹¹ Wilhelm Bousset, *Die Offenbarung Johannis (Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament begründet von H. S. W. Meyer, 16. Abteilung, 6. Auflage, Göttingen Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1906)*, p. 388.

¹² *Op. cit.*, II, 18-21.

¹³ Theodor Zahn, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes (Kommentar zum Neuen Testament, XVIII, Leipzig-Erlangen, Deichert, 1924-26)*, p. 509.

¹⁴ Henry Barclay Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John* (London, Macmillan, 1906), p. 185, on Apc 14:15; cf. also on v. 17 and v. 18.

¹⁵ *Op. cit.* in note 10, pp. 216 and 222.

¹⁶ D. W. Hadorn, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes (Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament, XVIII, Leipzig, Scholl, 1928)*, p. 150.

We may refer to Psalm 20, whose structure is this:

three stanzas (vv. 2-3, 4-5, 6-7; God is addressed)
 central distich (v. 8; the king confides in God)
 three stanzas (vv. 8-10 [10*cd*], 11-12, 13-14; God is addressed).

Analogous structures, sometimes with an introductory stanza or some secondary addition at the end, appear in Psalms 2, 5, 6, 10, 20, 57. The same form occurs in Zacharias 3:6-10:

(an introduction, v. 6)
 two stanzas (vv. 7, 8*a-e*)
 central distich (v. 8*fg*)
 two stanzas (v. 9)
 (a final remark in prose, v. 10).

Even in the Gospel of St. John we find a parallel of that form, e.g., John 5:19-30:

four stanzas (vv. 19, 20, 21, 22-23) beginning with "Amen, amen I say to you"
 central stanza (v. 24) beginning with "Amen, amen I say to you"
 two stanzas (vv. 25, 26-27) beginning with
 "Amen, amen I say to you"
 intermediate stichus (v. 28*a*) "Wonder not at this"
 two stanzas (v. 28*b*-29, 30)¹⁷

Apocalypse 14:6-20 is of the same type as these Semitic literary pieces. The personality which is by far the noblest of all the seven holds the center and is thereby exalted above the two triplets of angels; it is the one "like to a Son of Man," that is, Christ Himself. The stereotyped formulae unmistakably arrange the two triplets around Him, so that a Semitic reader could not fail to see the form of the whole section. As regards the logical development, it is true, the reader's expectation is not answered. Moreover, what is said of the fifth angel, compared with the words on the other angels is so little that it is hard to see in the present text the form originally intended by St. John. It rather serves as one of the many proofs that between him and the present text there intervened a secretary, whom Charles, for analogous reasons, calls "a faithful but unintelligent disciple."¹⁸

¹⁷ Paul Gaechter, S. J., "Strophen im Johannesevangelium," *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie*, LX (1936), 112-15.

¹⁸ *Op. cit.*, II, 147.

But the simple, yet beautiful Semitic literary form can hardly be anyone's but St. John's.

Taking the principle of symmetry as a lead, we turn to the vision of the first and second beast, or, as we prefer to call them, the beast and the pseudo-prophet (c. 13). In 13:1-3 the beast that rises out of the sea is described; and in vv. 4-8, its influence on mankind. Verses 9-10 are an address of the author to the readers, whereupon in vv. 11-17 the pseudo-prophet is described, with v. 18 as a final remark on the beast. The result of this quite primitive consideration is the following form:

- the beast (13:1-8)
- address to the reader (vv. 9-10)
- the pseudo-prophet (vv. 11-17)
- conclusion (v. 18).

A similar arrangement seems to be at the basis of chapter 12. Even as the text stands, the praise in heaven (12:10-12) divides it pretty evenly into two parts, vv. 1-9 and 13-17. But the text seems to be in disorder, containing two different visions or two different parts of one vision dovetailed into one another. It is, however, not difficult to disentangle the interlocked parts. The first vision revealed things that took place in the sky; it comprised vv. 1 and 3-4*b*; a small lacuna; vv. 7-9. Here the heavenly praise fell in (vv. 10-12), after which followed a vision of what took place on earth. Of this second vision a few words at the beginning seem to have been lost, then followed vv. 2; 4*cd*-5; 13-17. The two series of verses very nearly coalesce into two continuous stories. When they were combined in the present form, v. 6 was added erroneously, and so a doublet was created to v. 14. The literary form, then, is the following:

- Part I (vv. 1-9), or the vision in the sky (vv. 1; 3-4*b*; *x*; 7-9)
- the heavenly praise (vv. 10-12)
- Part II (vv. 13-17), or the vision on earth (vv. *x* + 2; 4*cd*-5; 13-17)

If we compare the heptads of the letters, the seals, and the trumpets with the seven bowls and the parts that are arranged according to the principle of symmetry, we find in these latter a rather important literary principle of the Apocalypse. In order to achieve certain

arrangements St. John was in the habit of using quite disparate matter as central points. As to their contents they divide rather than join that which precedes and follows, whereas formally they serve to link the material which the author intended to arrange in some one or other of his Semitic literary forms, symmetrical or numerical. Thus the praise of God (16:5-7) and a warning addressed to the reader (16:15) divide the seven bowls into groups of $3 + 3 + 1$ (compare Matt. 13 with its grouping of $1 + 3 + 3$); in Apocalypse 14:6-20 the scene of the Son of Man separates the two triplets of angels; in chapter 13 an address of the author to his readers has the same formal task with regard to the description of the beast and that of the pseudo-prophet (13:1-8 and 11-18), while in chapter 12 it is again a heavenly praise that stands between two fairly equal parts that describe visions. This literary procedure was evidently very familiar to St. John, but by no means peculiar to him, as the examples from the Psalms and the New Testament show. This literary principle draws our attention to possible formal functions which different matter may exercise within homogeneous matter. The next part will afford new examples.

Chiastic Symmetry

Akin to the forms of Apocalypse chapters 12, 13, 14:6-20, yet characteristically different from them is a symmetrical arrangement combined with a chiasmus, after the pattern $a + b$ and $b + a$. Such seems to be the form that comprises the second half of the Apocalypse, say chapters 12-20. It is even enlarged to three corresponding items on each side of the arrangement, as can easily be shown. In chapter 12 Satan turns up as the dragon, who in chapter 13 is followed by the beast and its pseudo-prophet; then, after much matter of diverse nature Babylon the Great is described (c. 17). Immediately after that there is a series of reports in a reversed order: first, the destruction of Babylon the Great (c. 18), then the beast and its pseudo-prophet (19:11-21), finally Satan's, that is, the dragon's, undoing (20:1-3, 7-10). This arrangement is obviously made purposely by, and designed after the pattern of chiasmus, only that it extends over three items, not as usual over two. True, it is blurred by interspersed parts, but none the less it is completely preserved and not too difficult to discover.

And this in spite of the complete absence of repeated formulae. The schematical form of chapters 12–20 is this:

- vision of the dragon (c. 12)
- vision of the beast and the pseudo-prophet (c. 13)
- vision of Babylon the Great (c. 17)

- destruction of Babylon the Great (c. 18)
- destruction of the beast and pseudo-prophet (19:11–21)
- destruction of the dragon (c. 20).

But there is more to be registered. The dragon-Satan, in chapter 12, is shown in relation to a female figure, the sun-clad woman of 12:1. In chapter 20, unlike the other evil agents, he is destroyed by degrees. First, he is imprisoned for a thousand years (20:1–3), then forever “hurled into the lake of fire and sulphur” (20:10). Between these two narrations we should put the description of another female figure, “of the bride, the wife of the Lamb” (21:9), who represents the millennial Jerusalem, as we may call her. This means the transposition of 21:9–22:2 between 20:1–3 (Satan’s imprisonment for a thousand years) and 20:4–6 (the millennial kingdom of Christ and His saints). The chief reason is that this first description of the heavenly Jerusalem differs from another, whose parts are 21:1–4c and 22:3–5 or 6; owing to its characteristic features the first should be put before Satan’s final destruction and the last judgment (20:11–15).¹⁹ Taking these observations into account we should give a somewhat different position to the two parts of the scheme that concern Satan. It can be expressed thus:

- vision of the dragon and the woman (c. 12)
- vision of the beast and the pseudo-prophet (c. 13)
- vision of Babylon the Great (c. 17)

- destruction of Babylon the Great (c. 18)
- destruction of the beast and the pseudo-prophet (19:11–21)
- destruction of the dragon, and the heavenly Jerusalem (cc. 20, 21, 22).

This form is broken up by various insertions. There is, first, the block of chapters 14–16. It consists of a vision of the Lamb²⁰ as

¹⁹ For the nature and original order of the matter contained in *Apc cc. 20–22* we refer the reader provisionally to Charles’ *Commentary*, II, 144–54.

Shepherd (14:1-5) and of two sections arranged in Semitic literary forms: three angels—Christ—three angels (14:6-20), and the vision of the seven bowls (c. 16) with its introduction (c. 15). It is plainly impossible to consider this entire part as belonging to the big scheme of chapters 12-20; chapters 14-16 taken as a whole are an obvious disturbance in it. On the other hand, we have learned that St. John is in the habit of arranging constitutive sections and even subsections of a literary form round smaller parts of quite different contents and so very likely we have to take 14:1-5 (the Lamb as Shepherd) as one of those dividing and combining parts. This is all the more likely as it actually is put in a place where it can exercise such a formal function, and because we have already seen that subsections of the great scheme are arranged symmetrically (cc. 12 and 13).

Another part that calls for our special attention is 19:1-10. These verses have little inner connection with the destruction of Babylon the Great (c. 18), and none at all with that of the beast and pseudo-prophet (19:11-21). But they happen to stand exactly between these two sections of the great scheme. Besides, they contain a heavenly praise like 12:10-12, so that there is every reason to ascribe to them a similar formal function as to 12:10-12. For our present purpose it is irrelevant whether or not vv. 9-10 belong to the preceding verses. The final result of our analysis of chapters 12-20 can be put forward in this form:

vision of the dragon and the woman (12:1-9 + 10-12 + 13-17)

vision of the beast and the pseudo-prophet (13, 1-8 + 9-10 + 11-18)
the Lamb as Shepherd (14:1-5)

vision of Babylon the Great (c. 17)

destruction of Babylon the Great (c. 18)

heavenly praise (19:1-10)

destruction of the beast and the pseudo-prophet (19:11-21)

destruction of the dragon, and the heavenly woman (20:1-3; 21:9-22:2; 20:4-10).

That this our result keeps within the Semitic literary forms both as to chiasmic symmetry and as to interspersed central parts can be gathered from parallels. Both elements occur together in the Eucharistic sermon in the Gospel of St. John (6:35-58):

- Part I (headline v. 35a)
 - long section (vv. 35-39)
 - interruption by the Jews (vv. 41-42)
 - short section (vv. 43-47)
- Part II (headline v. 48)
 - short section (vv. 49-51)
 - interruption by the Jews (v. 52)
 - long section (v. 53-57)
 - clausula to part II (v. 58)

The chiasitic arrangement here is merely one of the form and does not concern the contents; in this it differs from Apocalypse, chapters 12-20. The long sections and the short sections are of fairly equal length. The interruptions caused by the Jews obviously serve as formal elements in the whole arrangement. Even the long sections are subdivided symmetrically.²⁰

An example of subdivided sections, but without chiasitic symmetry is Psalm 114-115 (Hb. 116):

- two stanzas (vv. 1-2, 3-4a)
 - distich (v. 4cd, two-beat rhythm)
- two stanzas (vv. 5-6, 7-8)
 - central stanza (vv. 9-10)
- two stanzas (vv. 12-13, 14-15)
 - distich (v. 16ab, two-beat rhythm)
- two stanzas (vv. 16c-17, 18-19).

A third instance of this Semitic literary form may be taken again from John 8:31-41. The first part centres round the idea of "freedom," the second round that of "Abraham":

- first stanza (vv. 31-32)
 - Jews objecting (v. 33)
- second stanza (vv. 34-36)
- third stanza (vv. 37-38)
 - Jews objecting (v. 39ab)
- fourth stanza (v. 39c-41a).²¹

²⁰ Paul Gaechter, S.J., "Die Form der Eucharistischen Rede Jesu," *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie*, LIX (1935), 422-31.

²¹ Paul Gaechter, S.J., "Strophen im Johannesevangelium," *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie*, LX (1936), 406-7.

These parallels afford an objective basis outside the Apocalypse, from which we have approached the problem of the Semitic literary forms in that book. Once these forms are established as part and parcel thereof, it remains to be seen what their import is concerning the major problems mentioned at the beginning of this paper.

II. THE IMPORT OF THE SEMITIC LITERARY FORMS

Closed Forms

We have studied the arrangements according to the number seven (the seven letters, seven seals, seven trumpets, seven bowls), then an arrangement after the principle of symmetry, $3 + 1 + 3$ (14:6-20), and finally two symmetrical forms (cc. 12 and 13) which are parts of a greater form shaped after the principle of chiasmic symmetry (cc. 12-20). All these forms have in common that they are neatly rounded off, so that we may call them closed forms. Once we know their pattern, we know the number of their strictly constitutive elements. Take for example the seven bowls. That they are arranged after the traditional sacred number seven, excludes any further bowls as also belonging to that group; the same number also requires that there be no less than seven, not five or six. These seem to be truisms, but the truisms have not always been sufficiently taken into account. Furthermore, given the grouping of the seven bowls in $3 + 3 + 1$, by means of interposed other matter, their form excludes any other material between them. Of course, each individual form must be studied separately, as we tried to do, but their general nature as being rounded off is common to all of them and is the reason for calling them closed forms.

These closed forms are typically Semitic. They reveal a mind which was used to literary means of very simple, arithmetic proportions. Their simplicity is particularly striking where the author in a very un-Greek and unmodern way put in the numbers from one to seven, or repeated twice "another angel—another angel—another angel." Even in the great chiasmic symmetry of the second half of the Apocalypse, where such formulae are absent, the simple structure is undeniable.

The closed forms with the parts that serve as their introduction occupy by far the greater part of the Apocalypse: chapters 2-3 (the

seven letters), 5:1-8:1 (the seven seals), 8:2-11:18 or 19 (the seven trumpets), 12:1-22:2 (the description and destruction of dragon, beast and harlot). Within that last part there are two other closed forms, 14:6-20 (three angels—Christ—three angels) and chapters 15-16 (the seven bowls). These are nineteen out of twenty-two chapters, or, if we deduct chapters 1 and 22 as the introduction and the clausulae of the book, out of twenty. We should, however, also omit chapters 7 and 10:1-11:15, or, let us say, three chapters as containing matters which do not, or certainly do not obviously belong to those closed forms. That makes in rough measuring sixteen out of twenty chapters, or four-fifths of the whole book. Why this arithmetic? It shows that the Semitic mind of St. John with its predilection for those forms permeates practically the whole of the Apocalypse.

This being so, it is most unlikely that he gave to his book a general disposition—if there is any—of an altogether different character. It certainly would suit his mind as it is revealed by the closed forms, if the whole work consisted of seven main sections, as Lohmeyer,²² Hadorn,²³ and other scholars think—a problem into which we shall not enter here. But the stamp of St. John's mind does not admit of so complicated and intricate a scheme as E. B. Allo thought he had discovered in the Apocalypse. According to him, the author has combined the different parts by means of "emboîtements" (*Verschachtelungen*, *interlacings*). For example, 10:8-11 (the little scroll), according to Allo, refers to chapters 12-20. By putting it into the preceding section, chapters 4-11, St. John wanted to combine chapters 4-11 with chapters 12-20,²⁴ and so in other cases. Unfortunately for the reader, St. John does not betray these literary intentions of his by any word or formula. Allo himself admits that such a procedure is "rare and far-fetched."²⁵ He even doubts whether St. John was always fully conscious of this method, which, according to Allo, is applied throughout the work. In this way Allo tries to explain certain inconsistencies of the text, turning "repetitions of an apparent disorder" into "a superior order." Against this explanation stands the mentality

²² Ernest Lohmeyer, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes (Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament, hg. v. Hans Lietzmann, XVI, Tübingen, Mohr, 1926)*, p. 181.

²³ *Op. cit.* in note 16, pp. 4-5.

²⁴ *Op. cit.* in note 10, pp. lxxii-lcxxxv.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. lxxv.

of the author. The closed literary forms reveal a mind that likes clean-cut arrangements which it is not loath to express by monotonous formulae and numbers, or to make in other ways easily recognizable. Such a mind could not at the same time complicate his literary work by such subtle means that even an attentive reader is hardly aware of them.

The same answer applies to Allo's law of volutes. There are repetitions even within the same part; Allo mentions as an example chapter 12. He maintains that they were deliberate, being successive phases of explanation and giving part by part an ever clearer comprehension of a schematic vision, wherein the subsequent explanations were already contained. He calls this a "development in volutes" or "in concentric waves," speaking of "the law of undulations."²⁶ There is, however, an implicit contradiction, if Allo judges, in connection with the same chapter 12, that "it presents, as it were, several sketches of the same picture, one hastily placed after the other." Admitting that the juxtaposition of parts of this chapter is not satisfactory from our literary point of view, he thinks that "the inspired author had had no time to join them."²⁷ To jot down the matter somehow, and at the same time to observe the intricate law of volutes seems psychologically impossible. Besides, such a subtle law would indeed be most surprising in a Semitic mind as was St. John's, and in the face of his simple and lucid arrangements.²⁸

Closed Forms and Omissions

The closed forms offer a welcome means by which to judge omissions. If an author like St. John in the Apocalypse had mentioned the seven churches, but then had put down letters to only six of them, everybody would agree that a seventh was due, but had been lost, or had been omitted for some reason or other, contrary to the intention of the author. For by mentioning the seven churches beforehand and making them individually the addressees of a letter, John implicitly promised to bring the letters up to seven. And so in fact he did.

This same consideration applies to the seven seals, the seven trump-

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. lxxv-vi.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 156.

²⁸ Allo's third law "of perpetuity of antithesis," (*ibid.*, p. lxxvi) refers to the contents rather than to the literary form.

ets, and the seven bowls. He mentions, as we have pointed out, the heptad of the bowls in the introduction to that vision, and then develops the whole vision with all the seven bowls (c. 16). Similarly, before the seven trumpets are enumerated, their total number is mentioned in the introductory part to that vision; and so it is with the seven seals. But both these series strike the reader as being incomplete.

The seven trumpets consist of four plagues, which are described in an unbroken series (8:7-12), and of three woes, which are much emphasised, first by the great eagle (8:13), then by a sentence between the first and second and between the second and third woe (9:12 and 11:14). As the plagues and woes belong to the same category, the author by these verses as well as by mentioning the seven angels at the beginning of the whole series (8:2,6) implicitly pledged himself to recounting the vision down to the seventh and last evil portended by the trumpets. This every reader takes for granted, and justly so. Yet there is not a word of the seventh evil. When the seventh angel had sounded the trumpet (11:15), the seer witnessed a heavenly praise, or at least puts one in (11:15-18), and if the next verse also belongs to that vision, saw the heavenly sanctuary opened, "and there followed lightnings, and voices, and thunders, and an earthquake, and a great hailstorm" (11:19). After that, no description follows of evils wrought on men, but "another great wonder appeared in the sky" (12:1), etc. As all the other trumpet-blasts had introduced such evils, there is a part missing here, after either verse 18 or 19.

There might be an escape from this conclusion, if the seven were merely a collection of seven visionary events, no matter what their contents. But the seven letters and the seven bowls, as well as parallels outside the Apocalypse, seem to prove that, especially if the seven is stressed at the beginning, it is meant to contain seven items of the same kind. Consequently we are right in considering the seven trumpets as a promise in part unfulfilled. That St. John had the intention of presenting the whole series when he started with it, cannot well be doubted, nor that he had matter enough on hand to fill out the form he had chosen. The question then is: Did an unforeseen event prevent him from carrying out his intention, or did he carry it out as far as he was concerned with the shaping of the Apocalypse and did someone

else tamper with the Johannine form? There is a great deal to be said in favor of the latter alternative, but for the present we cannot decide the question.

A similar, but somewhat more complicated case, is offered by the seven seals (5:1-8:1). In the introduction to this vision there is no hint as to the significance of the seals or their breaking. But when the first, second, third and fourth seals are broken (6:1-8), four plagues to come are described. The analogy to the seven letters and the seven bowls strongly suggest that the remaining three seals also meant plagues, an expectation to which the sixth seal (6:12-17) in fact corresponds. On the other hand, the fifth seal (6:9-11) discloses a scene in heaven which is no plague, nor does it involve a plague that strikes the ungodly world, as do the plagues of the first four and the sixth seal. Finally, the seventh plague is altogether missing: "And when he had opened the seventh seal, there fell a silence in heaven for about half an hour" (8:1). Here the narration of the seven seals breaks off and that of the seven trumpets begins.

The closed form of the seven seals, and the five of its homogeneous parts out of seven entitle us to ask about the plagues of the fifth and seventh seal. Although the form of the seven seals is complete, its contents are incomplete. Simply to acquiesce in what we have in our text means to close one's eyes to the function of the closed form and to leave the problems of the two seals unsolved. For the problem of the fifth seal we suggest the following solution. The heavenly scene (6:9-11, the souls of the martyrs placed underneath the altar and crying for revenge) takes place immediately after the fourth seal, that is, at the point where St. John would break the series of seven into a group of four and of three (see the 3 + 4 letters and the 4 + 3 trumpets). It seems a natural explanation that the man who was instrumental to John in shaping the present text blundered by omitting one plague and erroneously prefixing its formula ("And when He had opened the fifth seal") to what John had intended to put in as an intermediate part dividing the four from the three seals.

This explanation implies that the closed forms derive from St. John himself. For it is utterly unlikely that their author should have repeatedly defeated his own intentions by not carrying completely into effect what implicitly he had promised and up to six-sevenths or five-

sevenths respectively, already carried out. The shortcomings can be attributed only to another man, subordinate to John and inferior to his mind. If we suppose that this man, in spite of everything he did to the form was also under the influence of the inspiring Spirit of God to the extent to which he contributed to the making of the Apocalypse, no difficulty arises on the part of Catholic doctrine.

The missing contents of the seventh seal are to be judged as in the case of the seventh trumpet. Of the possibility that the seventh seal was meant to develop into the seven trumpets, and the seventh trumpet into what we read in chapters 12-21 we shall speak later.

The closed forms also act as a protection against undue operations on the text. A case in point is Charles' dealing with the seven trumpets (8:2-11:19). They present a series of difficulties, if there is to be a steady development of ideas throughout the book and, consequently, through the seven trumpets. Fascinated by his conception of such an evolution Charles solved the difficulties by cutting out 8:7-12, that is, the first four trumpets, and admitting only the three woes. "Whereas," according to him, "the heptadic structure of the seals and of the bowls is fundamental and original, the heptadic structure of the trumpets is secondary and superinduced."²⁹ I do not think it would be difficult to show that the coherence of the matter put into the seven seals and the seven bowls is not a bit more original than that which we read in the seven trumpets. But apart from this reason, whose is the heptadic closed form of the seven trumpets, if not St. John's? The "faithful but unintelligent disciple" of John, whose presence is so often felt, is not a likely author of such a form; his blunders fit in ill with a sense for heptads. That would make it necessary to put in a third man between St. John and this disciple, a man who essentially changed considerable parts of John's work. How then could this still pass unanimously as St. John's? The heptadic structure of the trumpets rather speaks in favor of its Johannine origin. It seems better to take it with all its parts as original, including 8:7-12, and instead to rule out a pretended straight line of evolution of the sense in the Apocalypse. The inconsistencies between the different trumpets will be mentioned later in this article.

A similar case occurs in the closed form 14:6-20 (three angels—

²⁹ *Op. cit.*, I, 219.

Christ—three angels). Charles falls again a victim to his conception of an evenly developing story of visionary events, and therefore cancels verses 15–17 (Christ and the fourth angel) as a doublet. He was not aware that he thus destroyed the closed form. He may be right in regarding verses 12–14, for reasons other than that of the form, as misplaced, and we have ourselves hinted at the likelihood that the surprisingly short portion allotted to the fourth angel (v. 17) may be the result of someone's interfering with what St. John had originally intended to say. But the closed form of the whole piece must be taken as original, and with it go all its essential parts. There is no possibility of cancelling any of them, even if the alternative should be to forego the cherished idea of a straight evolution throughout the Apocalypse.

Closed Forms and Additions

The closed forms are also means to discover intrusions and additions. But we have seen that this is a delicate matter. Unless the entire forms are known with all their accessory parts, that is, with all the matter inserted in order to separate and join their essentials, portions might be eliminated that belonged originally to the text as St. John had conceived it. We have found to be of that kind what now goes under the fifth seal (6:9–11, probable), the heavenly praises (12:10–12; 16:5–7; 19:1–8 or 10), the exhortations (13:9–10; 16:15), and the Lamb as Shepherd (14:1–5).

These insertions differ in their contents from the matter of the closed forms wherein they have been put. Thus they separate the homogeneous portions of the closed forms. But they are so inserted as to help the reader to realise symmetric structures, or groupings of the sevens into four and three items. Besides they are all of a moderate size, proportionate to their formal functions. All these considerations taken together enable us to recognize their originality with a fair degree of certainty.

All other matters inserted into closed forms are discernible as an overgrowth that blurs the intended closed forms. This is especially the case, if they do not immediately serve to comfort the reader, as do all those inserted parts that belong to the closed forms. They invariably serve to mitigate the horrors caused by their literary surround-

ing with their visions of terrible plagues, of Satan, the beast, and Babylon the Great.

Omitting minor cases, we have to occupy ourselves with two big blocks of matter that considerably disturb the closed forms. The first is 10:1—11:13 (the angel with the open scroll; the measuring of the sanctuary; the two witnesses). It severs unduly the sixth and seventh trumpets, which are arranged in groups of four and three and do not admit of foreign matter where we read it. Also 14:6—16:21 (the closed forms of three angels—Christ—three angels, and of the seven bowls with their introduction) are an erratic block thrust into the great chiasmic symmetry of chapters 12–20. Not only is this block of such a size that it cannot be taken for a part with formal functions with regard to the constitutive elements of that symmetry, but it occurs where there is already an insertion (14:1–5, the Lamb as Shepherd) which serves the purpose of formally dividing two of the constitutive parts. For these formal reasons we have to consider that block as an intrusion foreign to the designs of the author of the closed form.

Finally, there is a somewhat shorter portion of text which is equally ruled out by the closed form, 7:1–17 (the sealing of the servants of God; the chosen people; the saints in heaven). This part severs the sixth and seventh seals, which, like the seven trumpets, are also arranged in groups of four and three and do not admit of such a break between the last two essential parts. This remains true even if the matter inserted here is akin to its literary surrounding.

The two pieces 7:1–17 and 10:1—11:13 have in common that both are inserted between the sixth and seventh constitutive elements of heptads. Why has this foreign matter been inserted in identical places of the closed forms of the seven seals and the seven trumpets? An answer may be gathered from those very forms. Their first four elements (the first to fourth seal, 6:1–8, and the first four trumpets, 8:7–12) are each a group of similar terse form, whereas the following seals and trumpets are described at greater length. This same method is also found in the seven bowls; the first four (16:2–9) or five are considerably shorter than the last two (vv. 12–21). This literary method of St. John seems to have been fraught with particular difficulties for his amanuensis when it came to writing the matter down, especially as this seems to have been done from memory. This may have led to inserting other material, because here the closed forms were not per-

ceived as equally fixed like their first parts. If this was so, the disciple of John added what he thought appropriate to those places, so that as a result we have, particularly in 7:1-17, matter which somehow suits its literary context.

If we thus cut out considerable portions of the present text, as keeping its actual place illegitimately, or against the original plan of St. John, and against the closed forms intended by him, we do not thereby deny their Johannine origin and authority. These matters are of two different kinds. Either they belong to the Apocalypse, but are misplaced, and their originally intended place can be determined, or they are matter that in John's intention did not form part of the book as he originally designed it. This latter group, then, would prove that the Apocalypse was not meant to contain all the seer had seen and had to say—a conclusion substantiated by the fact that the Apocalypse contains several things which St. John in all likelihood had explained to his congregation, whereas for us they will remain obscure forever; instances are the great eagle (8:13), the two witnesses (11:3-13), the martyrs underneath the altar (6:9), and the little scroll (10:8:11). This latter group of insertions is best explained as additions made by the assistant of John, and approved by the Apostle in a general way as parts of the book before or after their insertion, which approval, in this supposition, would have followed after John had laid out his original plan of the Apocalypse. By this explanation we account for 7:1-17; 10:1-11:13; and 14:6-20. To these parts no other place in the book can be assigned.

It is different with chapters 15-16, the seven bowls. This heptad has a double feature. On the one hand, the seven bowls are connected with the visions of dragon, beast and Babylon (15:2; 16:2, 10, 19-20), that is, with the structure of the chiasmic symmetry wherein the bowls are embedded. On the other hand, their tendency widely differs from that of those visions. For there is no thought of bringing Satan, beast and Babylon to conversion; they are the sworn enemies of God and His Church, and their fate can only be the one described in the visions of their destruction. But the people stricken by the plagues of the seven bowls are expected to abandon their evil ways and turn to God. Unfortunately this intention of God is thwarted: "They did not repent so as to give praise to God" (16:9; cf. v. 11).

These two features of the seven bowls do not blend. Either the

seven bowls from their origin formed part of the ideas that concern Satan, the beast and Babylon, in which case the remarks concerning the lack of penance are later accretions; or the seven bowls from the beginning were meant to illustrate God's efforts for the salvation of man, and then the connection with the structure of chiasmic symmetry is secondary. In fact the connecting elements, except 16:10, are only loosely attached to the vision of the seven bowls, and can easily be eliminated; 16:10 seems to have been put in the place of another item which was more in keeping with the rest of the plagues of the bowls. The seven bowls, then, in all likelihood were worked over when put into their present place. But this process did not go so far as to rule out the remarks which unmistakably prove the original tendency of the bowls concerning man. These observations confirm our conclusion drawn from the closed forms, that the seven bowls originally did not belong where we read them now.

But they also confirm another conclusion, namely, that by its form as a heptad the seven bowls is akin to the other heptads in chapters 5-11, even if the structure of the seven bowls, apart from the seven, is different from that of the seven seals and seven trumpets. The tendency in all three heptads is the same, as we read after the sixth trumpet: "Nor would they repent of the murders," etc. (9:21), a complaint that occurs twice in the seven bowls, as we have just seen. Besides, several of the plagues of the bowls are identical with, or very similar to, the plagues of the trumpets. Thus both form and content range the seven bowls with the seven seals and the seven trumpets.

It is certain, therefore, that the seven bowls are misplaced, and we may call it highly probable that their intended place was after the seventh trumpet. For this latter point we gain a remarkable support on the part of the literary forms. If we combine the bowls with the seals and the trumpets, there results a series of three heptads, that is, of three times seven, which, from the Semitic literary point of view, is a most satisfactory arrangement, as it combines the symbolic numbers three and seven. Analogies are not altogether missing.³⁰

³⁰ Thaddaeus Soiron, O.F.M., *Die Bergpredigt Jesu* (Freiburg i. Br., Herder, 1941), 120-21, after a penetrating analysis divides the Sermon on the Mount into three groups of seven parts each. The same division is indicated by the alineas in A. Merk's edition of the NT. By the shape of sentences, and in Mt 5:21-48, 6:2-6 (v. 7-15 is superadded to

The closed forms also afford a basis from which to view another kind of accretion, which perhaps is more one of scholarly interpretation than of the text itself. We have mentioned that the plague of the seventh seal is missing (after 8:1), as also that of the seventh trumpet (after 11:18 or 19). Most of the scholars explain the first fact by considering the seven trumpets as developing from the seventh seal and forming its contents,³¹ whereas the seventh trumpet is explained in the same sense with regard to the great vision of chapters 12 etc. by only a few scholars.³² Judging from the text as it stands, we cannot see how the closed forms of the sevens could dispense with a seventh constitutive element of the same type as the preceding six, nor how the seven trumpets could be the contents of the seventh seal, or chapter 12 that of the seventh trumpet. As the author had arranged those closed forms by the repetition of formulae, it is only reasonable to suppose that he would have indicated such a surprising departure from the chosen and so well-marked way by repeating the formulae at decisive points. But there is not a trace of them after 8:1 and 11:14.

All the same, the difficulty remains that both heptads break off at the same point. There is perhaps a slight possibility that St. John had had the plan to make the seven trumpets grow, as it were, out of the

a pre-existing form), and vv. 16-18 also by repeated formulae each group is subdivided:

introduction (5:3-16)

first group (5:17-48)

one general part (vv. 17-20)

six parts beginning with the same formula (vv. 21-48)

second group (c. 6). introduction (v. 1)

three parts of identical structure, with identical formulae (vv. 2-6 and 16-18)

four parts of varying structure (vv. 19-34)

third group (c. 7)

four parts: short sentence with illustration (v. 1-5)

short sentence (v. 6)

short sentence with illustration (vv. 7-11)

short sentence (v. 12)

three parts: different forms (vv. 13-23)

concluding parables (vv. 24-27).

³¹ Allo, Bousset, Charles, Hadorn, H. J. Holtzmann, Lohmeyer, R. Loenartz, O.P., "Plan et division de l'Apocalypse," *Angelicum*, XVIII (1941), 336-56; cf. p. 338.

³² Allo, Hadorn, Lohmeyer, Loenartz. Loenartz's system requires, among other things, that in 19:11-21:1 the formula, "And I saw," should seven times introduce constitutive parts—a hypothesis hard to admit, seeing that before 19:11 it occurs about a dozen times without that formal function.

seventh seal, and the seven bowls out of the seventh trumpet. His helper, in that supposition, would have missed these points completely, omitted the formulae indispensable in such a case, and obscured the points where the heptads were linked together. But there is no proof for this.

The Closed Forms and the Visions of the Seer

The closed forms are also helpful when it comes to answering the question, to what extent the present text of the Apocalypse represents the visions which had been granted to St. John. The closed forms are of a literary nature; other Semites before and contemporary with St. John have applied them. It would be strange indeed if the visions had had exactly the same forms as suited the literary taste of St. John and others of his race, so that John had nothing else to do than to see to it that they were written down faithfully, not only as to ideas and imagery but also as to order.

That this was not so is amply confirmed by an analysis of the matter arranged within the closed forms. Here we must content ourselves with referring to some examples. The piece 14:6-20 in all its elements expresses the idea of the coming judgment of God. Apart from this general idea, the various parts of which it is composed differ widely: the first angel announces the eternal Gospel (vv. 6-7), the second, the fall of Babylon the Great (v. 8), the third, the judgment on the worshippers of the beast (vv. 9-11). These are so many different scenes with no inner connection between them, nor with the following part (vv. 14-20). This part is more uniform in describing the execution of judgment under the image of harvesting and vintaging. It is quite conceivable that these various parts have been assembled in that closed form for literary purposes, but that God should have shown them to St. John in exactly that series is most improbable.

Another example is the seven trumpets. And here come in the observations which Charles, following former authors, has made on the inconsistencies between the first four trumpets and the last three, which are the three woes.³³ In analogy to the first, second and fourth trumpet, the third trumpet should bring about the destruction of "one third of men." But this is the effect of the two hundred million

³³ *Op. cit.*, I, 219-21.

demoniac horsemen of the second woe, the sixth trumpet (9:18), so that the expression has been changed into "many people" (8:11). This looks like a secondary accommodation of a phrase that originally was there, but ill fitted the sequence of the following trumpets. Again, by the first trumpet "all the green grass" is burnt up (8:7), while the locusts of the fifth trumpet are forbidden to "hurt the grass of the earth" (9:4), which then is still unburnt. This latter case, above all, proves that the matter put together into the closed form of the seven trumpets is of different provenance, and has been welded into one by a literary process. And so it is with every closed form.

In consequence, we have to suppose a considerable amount of literary work between the visions as St. John saw them, and the literary expression they have found in the book. This transformation into a literary form was, of course, first the task of the seer himself, and then also of the disciple of John, who could not, like his master, draw on what he had seen. It was inevitable that what St. John had communicated to him did not take the same clear shape in his mind as it did in the seer's mind. The problem here is, by what means did St. John communicate his visions to his disciple? Was it by writing, or by word of mouth? This problem is deserving of a special study.

General Conclusions

In the present essay we have confined ourselves to major parts only, leaving aside, as far as possible, the discussion of details. This was particularly true as regards the last three chapters of the Apocalypse, chapters 20-22. All we can say for the moment is that a close study of those details and especially of the last chapters amply confirmed our views based on the closed forms.

Apart from the points briefly mentioned above we may draw some general conclusions towards which our study of the closed forms was tending. These forms are apt to be taken as a fixed stratum in the evolution of the present text of the Apocalypse. Before them lay the sources which St. John used in making the book—his visions, the Old Testament, particularly some of the prophets, and perhaps other literary or oral sources more or less fixed. Whatever he made use of he put into the closed Semitic forms with a sovereign independence, except that he felt obliged to communicate by them the ideas conveyed

to him by divine revelation. He not only changed the forms of his sources as he pleased, but a comparison with the Old Testament texts on which he drew also shows that he adapted pre-existing forms to his personal ideas. That makes it impossible to find out by an analysis of his sources which parts are genuinely Johannine and which are not. Thus the efforts of Völter, Erbes, Spitta, et al., were beside the point.

Here arises a problem concerning the exegesis of the book. Should it concern itself only with the present text, or also with its previous, more immediately Johannine form? A good commentary will consider both throughout, and will distinguish clearly between them. The reason is clear. The closed forms evidently were not the last stratum in the making of the Apocalypse. There are smaller and larger parts intruded into them, and for that very reason we may suspect that they do not tally with what St. John first intended, even if he, as we must suppose, in some way or other subsequently approved of them. As we have said, these disturbances should be ascribed to one of St. John's disciples, a faithful man, inasmuch as he did his best to put into the book whatever genuine Johannine matter he had on hand, but less satisfactory, since he did not follow in all points the lead given to him by his master in choosing the Semitic literary forms. A general conclusion, then, is that Johannine diction and Johannine origin alone do not determine whether a certain portion forms part of the Apocalypse such as John originally had intended. When inserting those parts which we had to cancel as disturbances of the closed forms, this disciple acted more *praeter intentionem* than *contra intentionem* of John, the *contra* being restricted to his tampering with the literary forms as such.

What we have said about the relation of the closed literary forms to the visions of the seer tends to discredit any attempt at ascribing to the Apocalypse an unbroken and steady development, be it of visionary events, or of history, or even of one idea—except the general thought that God's rule over mankind will always have recourse to severe chastisements and will finally end in a complete victory. This conclusion is inevitable, since John did break up the material of his visions to group it according to his Semitic literary taste, and because he also made use of the Old Testament and probably other sources, mixing

them with his visions. If there was a straight series of development in his visions, it has not been preserved in the book. But is it likely that St. John, if he had seen such a development in his visions, would have broken it up so as to achieve his closed forms? This is extremely unlikely, and so is the assumption that by his arbitrary arrangements of visionary and other material he should have intended and succeeded in constructing beyond his visions such a steady development in the Apocalypse. It seems therefore that his visions, even by a succession of images and visionary events, rather conveyed ideas to the seer than any development deserving that name. These ideas St. John tried as best he could to convey also to his audience and readers.

In order to achieve this end, he arranged, as we have observed, his material in the closed forms, which he divided into two parts of different tendencies, showing by the first how God was to deal with sinful men, and by the other how he was watching over His Church in its struggle against Satan and his satellites. The main lines of the Apocalypse, therefore, are as follows:

Introduction and the seven letters (cc. 1-3)

Part 1: God and mankind: introductory vision (c. 4); seven seals, seven trumpets, seven bowls (5:1—6:17 [7:1-17]; 8:1—9:21 [10:1—11:13]; 11:14-19; cc. 15-16)

Part 2: God and Satan with his allies (12:1—14:5 [14:6-20]; 17:1—22:2)

Conclusion (c. 22).