

- (a) Chapter 12 opens with mythological imagery,⁴⁰ describing a pregnant woman⁴¹ who gives birth in the sky to a child who, like the woman herself, is threatened by a great red dragon (12.1-5a). The episode develops a special cosmological complex of motifs.⁴² The story ends with the child being taken away into heaven and the woman escaping into the desert as a place of shelter (12.5b-6 with 12.14). The mythological presentation of the son's birth and his fortunate fate (12.5) condenses and remembers Jesus' work in an abbreviated narrative.⁴³
- (b) The threat of the dragon is described in Rev. 12.3-4 in its own fashion, although the adjective μέγας anticipates 12.9. This threat leads into a new scene, which is headlined as "war in heaven" (πόλεμος ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ) (12.7a). The conflict between the dragon, who endangers the newborn child, and his adherents on one side, and the Angel Michael and his adherents on the other, is reported only in a brief summary (12.7b). The direct result of the "war" is the dragon's loss

er die Zukunft der Gotteskindschaft, die sich zwar schon in der Gegenwart ereignet und der Geschichte ihren Stempel aufdrückt, jedoch sie transzendiert [In the letters, John discusses the historical situation of the addressees, whereas in the visions he describes the future of God's reign, which begins to take shape in the present, and which puts its stamp on history, yet transcends it]."

⁴⁰ The mythological imagery shows that "der Verfasser ... [sich, M.L.] einer Vielzahl von Motiven und Vorstellungen unterschiedlicher Provenienz bedient und sie nach Art eines Mosaiks zu einer neuen Einheit zusammenschleibt [the author uses a variety of motifs and ideas of divergent origin and puts them together into a new entity like a mosaic]". H. Omerzu, "Die Himmelsfrau in Apk 12. Ein polemischer Reflex des römischen Kaiserkults," in M. Becker and M. Ohler (eds.), *Apokalypik als Herausforderung neutestamentlicher Theologie* (WUNT 2.214; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 167-194, esp. 170. She assumes a critical concern in relation to the emperor cult; see also D. L. Balch, "'A Woman Clothed with the Sun' and the 'Great Red Dragon' Seeking to 'Devour Her Child' (Rev. 12.1, 4) in Roman Domestic Art," in Fotopoulos (ed.), *The New Testament and Early Christian Literature*, 287-314.

⁴¹ On the different interpretations of the woman cf. P. Parkes, *La "donna" di Apocalisse 12. Storia, bianco, nuove prospettive* (Tesi Gregoriana. Serie Teologia, 25; Roma: Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 1997).

⁴² Cf., e.g., Kalms, *Der Sturz des Gottekindes*, 113-131, who also links the scene in Rev. 12.1-5a with conflicts over the propaganda of imperial veneration; ibid., 125: "Der Anspruch des weltlichen Herrschers auf Göttlichkeit dagegen wird auf ironische Weise umgekehrt. Der römische Kaiser, der sich selbst als Gott und Gottessohn, als Apollon oder als Sohn des Apollon sieht, muss sich in der gegensätzlichen Rolle wiederfinden. Für die Johannesapokalypse repräsentiert gerade er den Gottesfeind, den Satan, den Drachen, Typhon oder Python [The claim of the secular ruler to be divine is ironically inverted. The Roman emperor, regarding himself as God or God's son, as Apollo or the son of Apollo, needs to discover himself in the opposite role. As far as the Revelation of John is concerned, he symbolizes the enemy of God, Satan, the dragon, Typhon, or Python]."

⁴³ E.g., T. Holtz, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes* (ed. K.-W. Niebuhr; NTD, 11; Göttingen: V&R, 2008), 93; J.-W. Taeger, *Johannesapokalypse und johanneischer Kreis. Versuch einer traditionsgeschichtlichen Ortsbestimmung am Paradigma der Lebenswasser-Thematik* (BZNW, 51; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1989), 98. Such an interpretation is supported by the heavenly hymn (12.10-12) which interrupts and interprets the event in ch. 12. There is an actual defeat of Satan by the Christian follower of the Lamb which follows from the salvific death of Jesus, which could be read as a reference to 12.5 and its interpretation; cf. E. M. Humphrey, "A Tale of Two Cities and (at least) Three Women: Transformation, Continuity and Contrast in the Apocalypse," in Barr (ed.), *Reading the Book of Revelation*, 81-96, esp. 86. Differently, Giesen, "Satansturz und Gotteskindschaft," 176, who claims that "here the whole earthly life of Jesus is excluded."

of his place in heaven, the space of God's power, from whence the narrator develops his theocentric construction of meaning.⁴⁴ At first, the absence of the dragon from this place is taken as a pronouncement of victory: οὐδὲ τότος ἐνέβηθη αὐτῶν ἐπὶ ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ (12.8), which is immediately stated more precisely: ἐβλήθη εἰς τὴν γῆν (12.9b). The aorist passive of v. 9 presents the main meaning, while the threefold repetition of the verb applies this meaning to the dragon, the snake, the Devil, and Satan, who appear as the deceiving figure. The same judgment applies to his adherents. The Devil and his angels are thrown out of that space which belongs to the power of God and from which God and the Lamb will finally execute their victory. This expulsion is to be seen as a definite loss of power on Satan's part, inasmuch as he has now lost the possibility of acting in God's mighty sphere.

The fall of Satan recalls a synoptic saying of Jesus, which is reported only in the Gospel of Luke: ἐθεώκουν τὸν σατανάν ὡς ἀπορρατὴν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ πρεσβύτα (Lk. 10.18). While the verbal affinities are too few to assume literary dependence, the motif of Satan's fall from heaven to earth is quite similar. The Lukan context connects the fall of Satan to the exorcisms performed by Jesus' disciples (10.17-20), thus allowing the disciples to take part in the fight against Satan and his adherents. Revelation describes Satan's fall from heaven as his fall to earth (ἐβλήθη εἰς τὴν γῆν: 12.9, 13⁴⁵), where he is now endangering the Christian communities. They need to withstand this danger, and they will be able to do so because Satan himself has already been besieged.⁴⁶ The seer of Revelation may thus be regarded as an independent witness for an early Jesus tradition. Here, the seer takes up tradition and uses it in a creative manner when placing it within his new construction of meaning.

- (c) After Satan is thrown down to earth, he actively threatens the inhabitants of this space and therefore represents a danger to the earth and to everyone who lives on it. Rev. 12.11 reminds the reader that all Christians can overcome "by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony" (διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ ἀγίου καὶ διὰ τοῦ λόγου τῆς μαρτυρίας αὐτῶν), and 12.12 calls the heavens to rejoice over the defeat of Satan. Heaven is the most powerful place in the narrative geography of Revelation (cf. Rev. 4f).⁴⁷ Thus, the note of joy in heaven functions as an authoritative statement documenting the complete defeat of Satan.

Revelation evokes the motif of the accuser—which traditionally is linked with Satan—only in 12.10 (ὁ κατήγαγε τῶν ἀβελαφῶν ἡμῶν).⁴⁸ The allusion

⁴⁴ On this, see U. Schnelle, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (UTB, 2917; Göttingen: V&R, 2007), 714-715.

⁴⁵ An *inclusio* that frames the hymn in heaven celebrates the defeat of Satan as accuser of the Christian brethren; cf. J. L. Ressaigue, *The Revelation of John: A Narrative Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 27-28.

⁴⁶ A comparison of the two visions of the fall of Satan that focuses on the differences between them is offered by E. M. Humphrey, "To Rejoice or Not to Rejoice? Rhetoric and the Fall of Satan in Lk. 10:17-24 and Rev. 12:1-17," in D. L. Barr (ed.), *The Reality of Apocalypse: Rhetoric and Politics in the Book of Revelation* (SBL-Symp. 39; Atlanta, Ga.: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 113-125, esp. 115.

⁴⁷ Cf., e.g., Labahn, "Apokalyptische Geographie."

⁴⁸ Cf. Job 1.6ff; Zech. 3.1 (... ὁ διαβολὰς ἐστῆνκει ἐπὶ δεξιῶν αὐτοῦ τοῦ ἀντικειμένου αὐτοῦ); Job. 48.15 (temporary binding of Ird Mastema as accuser of Israel).

touches on cultural memories of Satan as the one who accuses people before God, but in this context the motif becomes a cipher for the danger that Satan represents. Since this accusation does not form a separate theme, it must be understood alongside the motif of space, presenting the victory over Satan and the joy that people receive along with it. The divine act of salvation from heaven comes then as a reflection on soteriology. The hymn at 12.10-12 praises God's salvation and power as well as Christ's authority (v. 10: ἡ σωτηρία αὐτοῦ). Finally, the adherents of Jesus in heaven are represented as those who have conquered through the blood of the Lamb (v. 11). The defeat of Satan and his casting down to earth function as an ethical as well as religious principle, exhorting the followers of Jesus to resist the dangers of Satan that follow from his actions. Rooted in soteriological claims, the Christian conquerors are those who have suffered death due to their word and testimony for Jesus. In reality, there was just one true witness of this kind, Antipas, but in Revelation he becomes a multitude of people through the radicalization of reality. The multitude of witnesses have already taken their place in heaven⁴⁹ and become a model for enduring the danger that follows from Satan's move to earth.⁵⁰

Verse 12b also articulates a "woe" on earth and sea, both of which are now directly confronted with Satan's wrath. The shout anticipates the scene with the beast from the sea and the inhabitants of the earth in chapter 13.⁵¹ What follows is the cardigogy of the omniscient narrator, who reports on the short period of Satan's activity, which is nonetheless a period of great danger due to Satan's immense wrath. The motif of a "short period" (cf., e.g., Rev. 6.11; 17.10; 20.3) is part of Revelation's program for generating comfort, setting limits to the time span of danger. It also indicates that God is in control of what happens, because he remains the ruler of history and stands side by side with those who keep his commandments and give witness to Jesus (12.17). The previous actions of God make it possible for Jesus' allies to survive the danger.

(d) The next scene (Rev. 12.13-17) not only interprets the present time of the Christian community in mythological imagery as it is maintained by the defeat of Satan, but also demonstrates how Satan, although the loser of the heavenly

49 Cf. M. Labahn, "The Resurrection of the Followers of the Lamb: Between Heavenly 'Reality' and Hope for the Future – The Concept of Resurrection within the Imagery of Death and Life in the Book of Revelation," in G. Van Oyen and T. Shephard (eds.), *Resurrection of the Dead: Bible Traditions in Dialogue* (BETL 249, Leuven: Peeters, 2012), 319–342; see also T. Nicklas, "Die Seelen der Geschlachten" (Offb 6.9)? Zum Problem leiblicher Auferstehung in der Offenbarung des Johannes," in T. Nicklas and F. V. Reiterer (eds.), *The Human Body in Death and Resurrection* (Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Yearbook, 2009), Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 2009), 329–349.

50 See also G. Iliou, *Satanismus und Gottesheerschaft*, 163: "Durch die Verknüpfung des Bekehrermodells mit der Anteilnahme am Sieg über Satan dient er pragmatisch der Motivation der Adressaten trotz Gefährdung ihres Lebens sich vom heidnischen Staat und Ansprüchen abzugrenzen [Through linking death due to confession with partaking in victory over Satan, he pragmatically serves the motives of the addressees to distinguish themselves from the pagan state and its demands, despite this putting their lives in danger]."

51 Resseguie, *The Revelation of John*, 175.

war, produces a period of danger. He is, however, limited by God (cf. 12.14), who is about to demonstrate his power.⁵²

Thus, on one hand, Satan's expulsion from heaven comforts those who adhere to Jesus (12.10), but on the other hand it confronts them with the warning to escape Satan's and his allies' actions on earth during their own lifetime. This reading can be deduced from the characterization of Satan as "the deceiver of the whole world," in Greek, "the whole *oikoumene*" (ὁ πλανῶν τὴν οἰκουμένην ὅλην, 12.9). The term "whole world" reflects the scope of imperial power as conceived by Roman imperial ideology.⁵³ When Satan's domain is described using the same term, his characterization gains a political overtone. The participle πλανῶν links the endeavor of Satan to the world, the sphere of his actions, thus pointing to the jeopardy that the addressees of Revelation face from Roman power and its religious claims. Therefore, the participle not only prepares for this third scene but also leads the ideal reader forward to the depiction of Roman power as Satanic in chapter 13 (... ἐδόθη [passivum divinum] αὐτῷ ... 13.7).

(e) In the scene where Satan has been thrown out off heaven, the sect of Revelation develops a conception of earthly power⁵⁴ as exercised by one who has already been besieged and who knows his own powerlessness. Satan acts in the mode of powerless revenge.⁵⁵ Rev. 12.8–13.8 depicts Roman imperial power with this same conception of the powerless yet still dangerous might of Satan. Thus, Revelation intends to demonize political and administrative Roman power.

The message of victory brings comfort to the addressees, but also necessitates that they follow a strategy of maintaining what they have received (cf. 12.17 with its context in 12.18–13.18; see below, "Satan's Actions in Early-Christian Time (Rev. 2–3): Present Time as the Time for Surviving the Danger"), paragraph 5. The danger loses its menace since the adherents of Jesus are aware of Satan's ultimate powerlessness. Satan's intent to deceive will fail since the visionary construction of Revelation presents his actions from the perspective of their final outcome—the end of history will clearly reveal that Satan's power has previously been overcome (see below, paragraph 4 of "The Elimination of Satan (Rev. 20): Future as Certainty of Conquest in the Present").

From this perspective on the loss of Satan's power due to his defeat in heaven, the sect admonishes his addressees to live according to God's commandments without fear. Revelation presents such a way of life as a prospect for the model reader. The present time, a period for acting according to certain rules and remaining separate from Roman power (cf. 18.4), is stretched across statements of victory over Satan. The narrative construction of Revelation presents this period of time as a period of threat from Satanic power and also as a period of protection by God and the Lamb, though not without pain, suffering, and the need for persistence.

52 Cf., e.g., Schnelle, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, 731.

53 The Roman emperor claimed to be the "master of the whole world" (ὁ τοῦ παντός κέκοτος κόσμος); *Syllage Inscriptionum Graecarum*, 3rd edn., 814 (Nero); quoted in U. Schnelle, M. Labahn, and M. Lang (eds.), *Neuer Weltstein. Texte zum Neuen Testament aus Griechenland und Hellenismus. Band 1.2. Texte zum Johannesevangelium* (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 2001), 249.

54 Cf., e.g., Wengst, "The Devil in the Revelation of St John," 71: "The vision of the war in heaven in 12.7–12 ... is John's way to settle the objective structures of power."

55 Cf. Wengst, "The Devil in the Revelation of St John," 71: "It is fighting a lost cause."

Contrary to Kalms, Marites Gielen interprets Satan's fall as his "final defeat"⁵⁶ while judging his earthly actions as "ein zum Scheitern verurteiltes Nachhangeltecht [a doomed rear-guard action]."⁵⁷ Satan's actions form an "irdische(s) Noch-Nicht ... als einer zeitlichen Verschiebung des sächlich parallelen Geschehens im Himmel und auf Erden [an earthly 'not-yet' ... as a temporal shift of materially parallel events in heaven and on earth]."⁵⁸ Her comment underscores the ongoing danger for the addressees, even though the victory over Satan turns into a preliminary event as far as its effect on earth is concerned. Nevertheless, the most remarkable achievement of the seer is to give insight into an enduring risk to life provoked not by a figure acting *sub specie aeternitatis* but rather by a powerless figure who was rendered impotent by God's power.

The Elimination of Satan (Rev. 20): Future as Certainty of Conquest in the Present

Rev. 20.1-3 depicts a temporary binding of Satan for one thousand years, during which time Christ rules with those loyal followers who were killed because of their testimony (20.4ff).

The motif of temporary binding recalls the binding of Prince Mastema as reported in *Jub.* 48.15, 18. Mastema, the ordinary name for Satan in the *Book of Jubilees*, is captured so that he cannot accuse the children of Israel for five days. When Mastema is afterwards freed he helps the Egyptians and pursues Israel, yet his actions ultimately assist God's secret plan to defeat the Egyptians in the Red Sea (cf. *Jub.* 48.16-17).⁵⁹ A similar interim period can be detected in Revelation as well.

- (a) In Revelation, the binding of Satan occurs after the victory over "the whore Babylon" and the beast with its prophets (chs. 18-19). These events represent the final act in the narrated history, coming about in various episodes.

The temporary binding of Satan follows a final attack on the community of God. Hence, the depiction of the binding contains elements of humor or parody. The capture of Satan lacks any indication of a battle, such as was mentioned in 12.7ff. Rev. 20.2 simply states that God "laid hold of the dragon" (ἐκράτησεν τὸν δράκοντα), who is presented as a powerless and somehow lopped figure who has no ability to defend himself—in an eschatological perspective, the

⁵⁶ Gielen, "Satansturz und Gottes Herrschaft," 180.

⁵⁷ Gielen, "Satansturz und Gottes Herrschaft," 182; differently, Kalms, *Der Sturz des Gottesgeistes* 20, who interprets the fall of Satan as preliminary.

⁵⁸ See Gielen, "Satansturz und Gottes Herrschaft," 181.

⁵⁹ A. Satake, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes* (KEK, 16; Göttingen: V&R, 2008), 383, regards the final binding of anti-divine power by God or by a representative ("endzeitliche Gefangennahme der gegen göttlichen Mächte durch Gott oder seinen Vertreter") as a close parallel to Rev. 20.1ff. / *En.* 10.10-12 presents an important example, showing the binding of the evil for seven generations before they are freed for their final condemnation.

scene portrays "the absurdity of"⁶⁰ Satan's power after his defeat. Here again, Satan is introduced with a catalog of different names that varies somewhat from that in Rev. 12.9b. Rev. 20.2 calls him "the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan" (τὸν δράκοντα, τὸν ὄφιν τὸν ἀρχαῖον, ὃς ἐστὶν διάβολος καὶ ὁ Σατανᾶς).⁶¹ The list here lacks the adjective μέγας and does not mention Satan's ability to deceive people.⁶² Both the parallels and the differences between the two lists are significant. On the one hand, the similarities indicate that the figure in Rev. 20 is the same as the one mentioned in Rev. 12, who fought a battle with Michael, was defeated,⁶³ and then endangered the inhabitants of the earth. On the other hand, the differences indicate that Satan has already been besieged and that his power to endanger people is coming to an end. The narrator now says that Satan has been bound and will be locked safely away in prison (20.3). It follows, then, that for a span of a thousand years no further danger of deceit will emerge from this figure (v. 3: μὴ πλανάσθαι ἐπὶ τὰ ἔθνη; cf. 12.9). The binding of Satan and the public reign of those whom he had harmed presents this figure as an overwhelmed character and indicates that justice—the justice of a just God⁶⁴—remains the last and conclusive word in the history of humankind.⁶⁵

- (b) The release of Satan from prison reported in Rev. 20.7 is one of the most surprising and threatening aspects of his portrait in Revelation. Although Satan has already been overcome and stripped of power, and although the martyrs have regained their powerful status once lost by death, a final endangering of the allies of the Lamb presents itself (Rev. 20.8). Satan escapes from prison one last time (ἐξέλθεται), again a caricature that prepares ultimately for his decisive defeat. The danger of the possible deceit of the nations (πλανάσθαι τὰ ἔθνη) is also portrayed with an element of parody, since Satan has already lost his power. When the powerless character again acts against the saints, he is now clearly a figure who does not truly represent a threat: he acts within approved limits rather than on the merits of his own power.

- (c) The final elimination of Satan, as well as that of the beast of chapter 13 and the false prophets (cf. 13.12; 19.20), is reported in 20.10. Just as Satan was "thrown down" from heaven in chapter 12 and "thrown" into the pit at 20.3, so now

⁶⁰ Cf. S. J. Friesen, "Sarcasm in Revelation 2-3: Churches, Christians, True Jews, and Satanic Synagogues," in Barr (ed.), *The Reality of Apocalypse*, 127-144, esp. 134-141, who defines satire and parody. According to Friesen, "satire" is widely used in Revelation; "satire and sarcasm describe many of the important features of John's denunciations" (131). This is true for some aspects of the concept of Satan as well.

⁶¹ See, e.g., Kalms, *Der Sturz des Gottesgeistes*, 77.

⁶² Instead of καλοῦμενος, like in 12.9, Rev. 20.2 now presents ὃς ἐστὶν διάβολος καὶ ὁ Σατανᾶς.

⁶³ See also Satake, *Offenbarung des Johannes*, 384: "Der Vf. will ... den Leser an die entscheidende Niederlage des Satans erinnern [The author intends to remind the reader of the crucial defeat of Satan]."

⁶⁴ On God as a just figure in Revelation cf. T. Soding, "Gott und das Lamm. Theozentrik und Christologie in der Johannesapokalypse," in Backhaus (ed.), *Theologie als Vision*, 77-120, esp. 82-85.

⁶⁵ On depicting God's justice in Rev. 20.1ff, cf., e.g., R. J. McKelvey, "The Millennium and the Second Coming," in Moyise, *Studies in the Book of Revelation*, 85-100, esp. 98.

he suffers yet another "throwing": ἐβαλήθη (20.10; cf. the threefold ἐβαλήθη, respectively ἐβαλήθησαν in Rev. 12.9; see also 12.13). As the deceiver of all nations, who have been mentioned earlier in the context (v. 10: πλανῶν αὐτούς; cf. 20.3, 8), the Devil will be thrown into a lake of fire and brimstone. The personal pronoun αὐτός has a general meaning here and should not be limited strictly to the previous episode. The deceiving of Satan's adherents leads him to the place of his final destruction, which Revelation treats as an eschatological place for the elimination of God's enemies. The main sin of Satan is seen in his efforts to lead people away from God. Such a fault will ultimately cause Satan's removal, as well as the removal of all his allies and adherents.

These final stages of Satan's activity demonstrate that he truly is dangerous, but that his power is broken and hence limited. Rev. 20 underscores that this power is broken by presenting Satan's judgment. Deceiving people is seen as the act that will merit final punishment.

Since the narrator claims that God has given him foreknowledge (Rev. 1.1-3), such a view into the future diminishes the danger of the present time. Hence, the hazardous actions of Satan turn into their own caricature, since Satan's power is already broken and limited. Satan is driven by his wrath, which certainly takes the form of a threat (12.17), but his possibilities for success are limited by God's power: he is dangerous, but in the end a loser. For the addressees of Revelation, Satanic deceptions in the extratextual world should be viewed as bygone acts, because they will be exposed to a judgment that sets God's allies into their rights. The literary construction of Satan thus opens a hermeneutic to interpret the world outside the story.

The addressees should thus read Revelation as both admonition and exhortation, since both together emerge from the two facets of Satan's elimination in 20.10. The reader who understands the seer's conception of Satan as a powerless and conquered character will understand his or her own place in society: those who keep God's commands risk their lives, but they will no longer be deceived by the social and political representations that the text calls "Satanic." Satan's intent to deceive will thus be discredited by the broken fascination of his power.

Satan's Actions in Early Christian Time (Rev. 2-3): Present Time as the Time for Surviving the Danger

Most occurrences of the term "Satan" in Revelation (five of eight references) appear in the letters of proclamation in chapters 2-3. Taken together, these letters form a critical interpretation and construction of the addressees' situation,⁶⁶ referring to passages from Scripture and to typical motifs from their local settings. The seer analyses the social, political, and religious

66 Cf., e.g., B. Kowalski, "Das Verhältnis von Theologie und Zeitgeschichte in den Sendschreiben der Johannes-Offenbarung," in Bachhaus (ed.), *Theologie als Vision*, 54-76, esp. 75.

situation of the addressees, and also their modes of religious and social response to those situations. The main task is to promulgate the mode of religious and ethical behavior that is recommended throughout the larger story. The seer communicates praise and blame to the communities in the form of a communication between the elevated Christ and a representative of each community, the so-called "angels," who are probably located in God's sphere in heaven as well.⁶⁷ Each letter is an authoritative message to the addressees that presents the model reader as someone who enjoys eschatological salvation because s/he acts in accordance with the ethic proposed by the seer. The letters of proclamation thus adopt an exemplary tone, reaching beyond the specific local situations described in each of them.

- (a) In Rev. 2.9 and 3.9, the reader meets the "synagogue of Satan" (συναγωγὴ τοῦ σατανᾶ).⁶⁸ People who belong to such "synagogues" in Smyrna (2.9) and Philadelphia (3.9) claim that they are "Jews" (τοῖν λεγόντων Ἰουδαίους εἶναι). The seer characterizes this claim as false (οὐκ εἰσὶν; 2.9) and, indeed, as a "lie" (ψευδοῦνται; 3.9). This interpretation ties a social and religious entity, the Jewish synagogue, to the literary construction of Satan. If Satan is an antagonist of God and a liar, it follows that his synagogue and its people would share in the same lie.

The label "synagogue of Satan" appears to parody LXX references to the "synagogue of Israel" or "synagogue of Israelites" (e.g., Exod. 35.1, 4, 20; Lev. 4.13; 16.5, 17; 19.2, 22.18; Deut. 33.4). This alteration raises the question of why particular synagogues are characterized as anti-divine and portrayed as a setting for Satanic actions. The corresponding reference to the "blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not" (2.9) is of crucial importance, but scholars disagree on the meaning of this phrase. One solution interprets this "blasphemy" through the lens of 2.10, which notes a danger originating from Satan that may illustrate the effects of such blasphemy: "the Devil is about to cast some of you into prison that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation." Thus, some members of the audience will be cast into prison in order to test the whole community (ἐξ ὑμῶν ... ἵνα πειρασθῆτε).⁶⁹ The most likely interpretation of the social-political reality behind this statement suggests that members of the community "are reported by men outside the Church for withdrawing from public life which means being enemies of the existing order and therefore being

67 The manuscripts evidence some variation, so one could at least ask if the most original form of some letters leaves the location of the "angels" open; cf. M. Karer, "The Angels of the Congregations in Revelation – Textual History and Interpretation," *Acta Patristica et Byzantina* 21 (2011) 57-84.

68 On the term and its different interpretations cf., e.g., P. Duif, "The Synagogue of Satan: Crisis Mongering and the Apocalypse of John," in Barr (ed.), *The Reality of Apocalypse*, 147-166; D. Frankfurter, "Jews or Not? Reconstructing the 'Other' in Rev. 2.9 and 3.9," *HTR* 94 (2001), 403-425; S. J. Friesen, "Sarcasm in Revelation 2-3," 134-141; J. Lambrecht, "Synagogues of Satan" (Rev. 2.9 and 3.9): Anti-Judaism in the Book of Revelation," in R. Bieringer and D. Polleley (eds.), *Anti-Judaism in the Fourth Gospel: Papers of the Lennon Colloquium, 2000* (Jewish and Christian Heritage Series, 1; Assen: Van Gorcum, 2001), 514-530.

69 Rev. 2.10b may allude to Dan 1.12, 14.

politically disloyal.⁷⁰ When 2.10 calls the source of such action the "devil" instead of "Satan" (2.9), this modification does not refer to a different source or situation but rather reflects a typical literary variation that occurs several times in Revelation.

The blasphemy of the synagogue thus does not consist in a verbal attack against God, but rather in precise actions by members of the synagogue who play into Satan's hands by accusing Christians. As Wengst notes, the blasphemers here "are men who act,"⁷¹ and these men/women belong to different social and religious parties that are closely connected to Satan. The action of men and women inside (and possibly outside) the text is presented as an action of Satan/ the Devil, a characterization that clearly serves a rhetorical purpose. Because these activities are described as "Satanic," they should be understood within the larger literary conception of Satan developed in the story of Revelation.

Compared to the letter to Smyrna, the letter to Philadelphia (3.7-13) is less precise in explaining why a certain "synagogue" is charged with collusion with Satan. Here the reference to a "synagogue of Satan" is associated with acts of honoring Christ, which the members of this group will be forced to perform.⁷² The seer does not explain, however, why such forced subjugation is merited. One reason can be deduced from the positive praise given to the community, who adhere to the word and name of the risen Christ (καὶ ἐτήρησας μου τὸν λόγον καὶ οὐκ ἠγνόησας τὸ ὄνομά μου; 3.8; see also v. 10). Such terminology points to a situation in which effort is required to keep the word and the name of the risen Christ (cf. 12.17).⁷³ In 3.10, this same situation is described as an "hour of temptation" (ὥρα τοῦ πειρασμοῦ), recalling the language of 2.10. The combined references to "temptation" and the "synagogue of Satan" thus reasonably suggest that the situation envisioned in Philadelphia is parallel to that already mentioned in Smyrna.

Taking Rev. 2.9-10 and 3.8-10 together, the seer envisions a situation of arrest and imprisonment as the result of behavior that opposes the general religious and political norms of society. Such arrests seem to be provoked by the denunciation of Christians by members of the "synagogue of Satan." A similar situation is described in the letters of Pliny and Trajan,⁷⁴ which speak of a practice of denouncing Christians that leads to their arrest and interrogations by members of the state, who attempt to force them to curse Christ ("*maledicere Christo*"). Such denunciations urge the accused to abandon their belief and to bring an offering to Caesar instead of Christ or suffer the death penalty (cf. the mention of Antipas in Rev. 2.13).⁷⁵ One may assume that Jews sometimes participated

70 Wengst, "The Devil in the Revelation of St. John," 69.

71 Wengst, "The Devil in the Revelation of St. John," 69.

72 Cf. Saake, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes*, 182.

73 U. B. Müller, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes* (ÖTbK, 19, Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlag und Würzburg: Echter, 1984), 130.

74 E.g., Wengst, "The Devil in the Revelation of St. John," 69.

75 See Klauck on the link between killing the "loyal witness" (ὁ μαρτυρῶν μου ὁ πιστός μου) Antipas and the characterization of the Roman treatment of accused Christians according to the letters between Pliny and Trajan: H.-J. Klauck, "Das Sendschreiben nach Pergamon und der Kaiserlaut in der Johannesoffenbarung," *Bib* 73 (1992), 153-182, esp. 161-163. "Nach diesem Modell dürfen wir uns das Schicksal des Antipas am ehesten vorstellen. Er war sozial

in such denunciations,⁷⁶ perhaps simply as a way of protecting themselves. If this is indeed the case, then such a situation might be taken as the most reasonable background for Rev. 2.9-10 and 3.8b-10a. Hence, the seer identifies the synagogue with anti-divine actions by Satan and exhorts the reader to keep the witness. Read against the seer's larger conception, the testing of Christians is a test of one's ability to survive the danger caused by Satan, whose power has already been overcome by God. Surviving these attacks (i.e., maintaining the Christian confession) allows one to participate in Satan's loss of power and to view him as a powerless loser.

On the level of the text, Satan stands for the Roman administrators, who are identified with Satan inasmuch as the risen Christ explicitly characterizes their actions as the deeds of Satan. According to the seer's construction of reality, Christians are exposed to the direct actions of Satan himself. The wrath of the besieged devil (12.17) is a danger for the social integrity of the community and its members. Knowing that God is truly the victorious one will empower believers to endure Satan's schemes. However, Satan and his followers, who have been deceived by him, will be defeated. Once more, exhortation and admonition merge in the story.

(b) According to Rev. 2.13, the community at Pergamon lives near the "throne of Satan" (καθουκίς, ὅπου ὁ θρόνος τοῦ σατάνᾳ).⁷⁷ Indeed, Satan himself

auffällig geworden aufgrund seiner neuen, vom Glauben bestimmten Lebenspraxis und hatte eine Anzeige provoziert. Im Gerichtsverfahren verweigerte er das Opfer vor Götter- und Kaisersbild, er bekannte sich weiter zu Jesus als seinem Herrn, anstatt ihm, wie es Plinius forderte, zu verfluchen. Das kostete ihm das Leben [We may imagine what, at best, was the fate of Antipas according to this model]. He became socially conspicuous due to his new way of life dominated by faith, and consequently provoked a complaint. In court proceedings, he refused to make an offering in front of the statues of the gods and the emperor, continuing to confess Jesus as Lord instead of cursing him as Pliny demanded. That cost him his life!"

76 In the context of Δεινόντων λαυροῦς, Söding, "Siegetrypen," 342, envisions a group of people who sympathize with Jewish synagogues or who hide themselves behind the Jews.

77 The city of Pergamon received the allowance to build a temple for the veneration of Dea Roma and Augustus in 29 BCE; this may be the predecessor to the later temple of Trajan: Klauck, "Das Sendschreiben nach Pergamon," 158-159. In 20 BCE a statue of Augustus was erected in the yard of the temple of Athena. This means that particular elements of the imperial cult were present in Pergamon either in architecture or in cultic matters, providing an adequate backdrop to references to the "throne of Satan" in Pergamon (see also the reference in H. Koester [ed.], *Pergamon, Citadel of the Gods: Archaeological Record, Literary Description, and Religious Development* [HTS, 46, Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press, 1998], W. Radt, *Pergamon, Geschichte und Bauten einer antiken Metropole* [Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1999]). Thus, it is not necessary to limit the reference at Rev. 2.13 to the single temple for Roman imperial veneration which was later erected under Hadrian.

According to Resseguie (*The Revelation of John*, 91 with note 29), there is no need to identify any specific place with "the throne of Satan." It is a "counterfeiter" to God's throne, by which the text raises the question: "Who rules?" (ibid., 109), referring to E. Schüssler Fiorenza, *Revelation: Vision of a Just World* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1981], 58, 120). However, the "throne of Satan" is located in one specific city in the seven letters and it is also referred to as the place where Satan dwells. Although I do not deny that "throne of Satan" carries a general meaning, characterizing Roman power as a representation of Satanic rule on earth, the reference in the letter to Pergamon links the symbolic meaning with a distinct place that represents that power and its interpretation in the story.

lives in this city (ὁ σατανᾶς κατοικεῖ). The term κατοικεῖν may suggest both a geographical and a symbolic interpretation. Symbolically, the term "throne of Satan" forms a semantic line that points to the "throne of the dragon" (13.2) and the "throne of the beast" (16.10), linking the letters of proclamation to the visionary section of the book. The bridging element may be seen in the desire of the latter figures (dragon and beast) to obtain anti-divine power, which is first seized by the beast from the sea (13.2, 4) and then by the dragon. The throne of Satan in Pergamum belongs to this same complex, since it represents power. According to Revelation, Christians are threatened by anti-divine religious and social power; in the face of this power, they must maintain the name of Christ and belief in him even in the face of death, as in the case of the only Christian martyr mentioned by name in the book, Antipas (2.13). The wording (οὐκ ἤντησεν τὴν πτότιν μου ("You did not deny my faith," 2.13) recalls the term *medietate* as used by Pliny the Younger (*Ep.* X 96.5). The anti-divine claim of power depicted in the throne of Satan realizes itself in the pressure on Christians to reject their belief. Christian belief is nothing more than superstition from a Roman perspective (*superstitio*), yet this Roman perspective is, in turn, reckoned as Satanic by Christians. Geographically, the reference to the "throne of Satan" takes its precise locus on the acropolis in Pergamum with its places of Roman imperial veneration. The danger for the community and its members is heightened by the fact that the anti-divine claim comes to them in an ongoing and visually fascinating presence of power located in their home city.

Thus, the presence of Satan is clearly visible in institutions and places outside the Christian community. But while these are outside, Satan is still a particular danger for the existence of the community, challenging it to maintain the word of God and the name of the risen Christ and to persist in their belief.

- (c) In contrast to the proclamations to Smyrna and Pergamum, the letter to the community in Thyatira addresses an inner-Christian debate. Rev. 2.20-21,⁷⁸ whose doctrines are not shared by those addressees whom the seer holds in positive regard.⁷⁹ Her teaching is a divergent one (τὴν ὁδοῦ τὴν ταύτην). The seer refers to a Christian group who are, in his view, self-deceived (ὡς λέγουσιν) and who assert that they know "the deep things of Satan" (τὰ βάθη τοῦ σατανᾶ). It is difficult to determine whether the term "deep things of Satan" is to be taken as a quotation of their doctrine⁸⁰ or simply reflects the larger conception of Satan developed in the story.

The teaching of Jezebel is clearly portrayed as a false and dangerous doctrine (2.20). She calls herself a prophetess and "teaches and leads my bond-servants astray, so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols" (ὁδοῦ καὶ πλανά τοὺς ἐμούς, δοῦλους προνοεῖν καὶ φάγειν

⁷⁸ Cf. Satke, *Offenbarung des Johannes*, 173.

⁷⁹ The difference between blame in 2.20 and praise in 2.24 is indicated by divergent terms mentioning tolerating (ἀφείε) in v. 20 and embracing teaching (ἐξομουν τὴν ὁδοῦ τὴν ταύτην) in v. 24.

⁸⁰ Cf., e.g., Satke, *Offenbarung des Johannes*, 173; J.-W. Taeger, "Begründetes Schweigen. Paulus und paulinische Tradition in der Johannesapokalypse," in idem, *Johanneische Perspektiven. Aufsätze zur Johannesapokalypse und zum Johanneskreis 1984–2003* (cd. D. C. Bieri and D.-A. Koch, FRLANT, 215; Göttingen: V&R, 2006), 121–138, esp. 130.

εἰδοδόθοντα). The terms used here indicate the seer's primary concern. Jezebel is too open to the religious claims of the environment, especially those of Roman rule, apparently in response to economic necessities.⁸¹ The accusation of idolatry is often used in the OT to blame the Israelites for the veneration of foreign cults, rather than to criticize bodily/moral misdeeds, and thus may be viewed here as a rhetorical commonplace (cf. Hos. 2.4-17; Isa. 1.21; 57.7-13; Jer. 3.1-4.4; Ezek. 16.15-22; 23). In contrast, the accusation of eating sacrificial meat offered to foreign deities could reflect historical realities.⁸² For Jezebel, taking part in ancient social life was not a form of compromise, even in cases involving certain religious practices and customs. Becoming aware of the "deep things of Satan" means to realize his ineffectiveness and, consequently, to adopt a posture that allows participation. A similar notion is evident in 1 Cor. 8.4, and may thus be recognized as emerging from Pauline ideas.⁸³ Obviously, the seer agrees that Christians should acknowledge their victory over the anti-divine world; his main point of disagreement with Jezebel relates to his interpretation of the present time. According to Jezebel, Satan is a loser who no longer has influence over the lives of Christians; according to the seer, Satan is ultimately defeated but still may lead people astray. Christians are endangered by the Devil's deceit and may share his eschatological annihilation. The seer therefore does not permit compromise, opting instead for a radical escape from current social structures (cf. 18.4).⁸⁴

Jezebel's teaching is characterized as an act of deceit, and it is not coincidental that the same verb is used to characterize Satan. Since the seer allows for no compromise, the teaching of the Christian prophetic is seen as similar to the actions of Satan. It follows that the seer regards every posture of openness toward society and its political or religious claims as reflecting the mood of Satan. The classification of anti-divine actions comes as a strong rhetorical impetus, similar to the mode of discourse in ancient polemical statements (e.g., the term "sons of darkness" in the Dead Sea Scrolls) that serve a destructive rhetorical strategy.⁸⁵ The rhetorical impulse seeks to change the addressees' mind, but it also builds social boundaries within the Christian community. Such demonization is a typical element of ancient rhetorical discourse, but this fact does not prevent modern exegetes from adopting a critical posture toward the text.⁸⁶

- (d) Another pillar of the seer's model for interpreting present times may be found in the cycle of visions in Rev. 12.18–13.18. Rev. 13 is crucial for the understanding of Satan and his power, because the beast from the sea, which represents Roman

⁸¹ Klauck, "Das Sendschreiben nach Pergamon," 167.

⁸² Giesen, "Das Römische Reich im Spiegel der Johannesapokalypse," 141: "Teilnahme an heidnischen Festmählern [participation in pagan banquets]."

⁸³ Differently, Kalms, *Der Sturz des Gottesknechts*, 25, who puts the claim in line with Pauline tradition: "Dies nimmt vermutlich den mit 1 Kor 2.10 formulierten eigenen Anspruch der Irthümer auf, 'die Tiefen Gottes (τὰ βάθη τοῦ Θεοῦ) erkannt zu haben [Presumably, it takes up the claim of the false teachers of 1 Cor 2.10 to have knowledge of the 'depth of God' (τὰ βάθη τοῦ Θεοῦ)]."

⁸⁴ Cf. Schlotissek, "Mittelalter an der Bedrängnis," 172–207.

⁸⁵ Cf., e.g., D. Sanger, "Literarische Strategien der Polemik im Galatierbrief," in O. Wischmeyer and L. Scomaiench (eds.), *Polemik in der frühchristlichen Literatur. Texte und Kontexte* (BZNW, 170; Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 2011), 155–181, esp. 172.

⁸⁶ See Schuster Fiorenza, "The Words of Prophecy," 17–18.

power and its political leader(s), is depicted as carrying out the rule of Satan with the permission of God himself. In the mode of visual perception, the seer offers a construction of the social, religious, and political world of his addressees with regard to Roman imperial power.⁸⁷ The wrath of Satan is here much more concrete, taking the form of offering his power to the beast from the sea (13.2: καὶ ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ ὁ θάλασσαν τὴν δύναμιν αὐτοῦ καὶ τὸν θρόνον αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐξουσίαν μεγάλην) and to the second beast, which is linked to the first by exercising power on its authority (13.12). As far as the second beast exercises the power of the first beast, who again represents Roman imperial power, it exercises its claim to authority (τὴν ἐξουσίαν τοῦ πρῶτου θηρίου πασάν τὴν ἐν ὧν αὐτοῦ) predominantly in public and ritual acts. Often the second beast has been identified with the priesthood of the imperial cult,⁸⁸ a thesis that is highly plausible. This thesis fits with the active nature of the figure of Rev. 13.11ff, highlighting its unity and diversity compared to the first beast, and also fits with the categorization of this figure as a pseudo-prophet in 16.13, 19.20, and 20.10. The cultic aspect of claiming authority is important, since it means danger for Jesus' adherents and since it forms the anti-divine claim of Roman authority that is present in these figures.

The fascination that imperial power generates is depicted in a vivid sensory fashion through the portraits of both beasts. Their actions emerge from power and melt into a scene of religious authority,⁸⁹ as it is presented in Rev. 13.3ff. At the same time, the seer presents this spectacle as an imitation of Christological as well as soteriological demands.⁹⁰ However, the real reader understands this spectacle as a parody of Christ, as evident from the fact that common elements in the portraits of these beasts and the Lamb/Christ reveal that the former are inferior in both their nature and their claims to power. These common elements include the performance of signs (13.13), which deceive the inhabitants of the earth (13.14a: καὶ πλανά τοὺς κατοικοῦντας ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς γινῆ); bringing life to people (13.15); horns like those of the Lamb (13.11 and 13.1); and, the lethal wound healing itself (13.13a, 14b; see also 13.3). Sometimes the vision of the beast in Rev. 13 is reckoned as a counter depiction of the Lamb.⁹¹ The dragon as a source of power (13.4a: καὶ προσεκύνησαν τῷ δράκοντι, ὅτι ἔδωκεν τὴν ἐξουσίαν τῷ θηρίῳ), just like the beast exercising authority, obtains divine veneration (13.4, 8, 12); refusal to venerate him would lead to death (13.15).

87 See Söding, "Siegetypen," 335, who correctly sees a mixture of allusions to imperial veneration in Rev. 13.

88 See, e.g., Aune, *Revelation*, 756; Gielen, "Satansturz und Gottesherrschaft," 168; Krauck, "Das Sendschreiben nach Pergamon," 173.

89 Cf. the impressive interpretation of "looking on the backside of the animal and being amazed" in Rev. 13.3b regarded as a depiction of fascination by the beast by D. Perzoli-Ogliati, "Between Fascination and Destruction: Considerations on the Power of the Beast in Rev. 13.1–10," in M. Labahn and J. Zangenberg (eds.), *Zwischen den Reichen, Neues Testament und Römische Herrschaft* (TANZ, 36; Tübingen and Basel: Francke, 2002), 229–237.

90 Cf., e.g., D. Perzoli-Ogliati, *Täuschung und Klarheit. Zur Wechselwirkung zwischen Vision und Geschichte in der Johannesoffenbarung* (FRLANT, 175; Göttingen: V&R, 1997), 128 on Rev. 13.3.

91 Schnelle, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, 720: "Tervision ... als Gegenbild zur Heilsgestalt des Lammes."

However, the narrator clearly states that any distribution of power is finally the prerogative of God, who permits all these acts. Such a statement might seem puzzling, but ultimately the seer keeps everything under God's control, a strategy that again might serve to comfort the reader.⁹²

The venerated of the beasts include Christians who cannot resist the fascination of Roman imperial power (cf. 13.8: all inhabitants on earth worship the beast, secondarily excluding those whose names are written in the Book of Life). The defeat of Satan and his final elimination provide a counter to the fascination that their power generates, which is judged by the value system of the text as anti-divine.

The seer of Revelation uses the literary concept of "Satan" every time he wishes to confront difficult circumstances, especially in the seven letters to the churches. At first glance, it is all about political and administrative power. This theme is particularly prominent in cases of persecution, which are also initiated by members of Jewish synagogues in the region where Revelation was written—for this reason, such "Jews" are counted on the side of Satan rather than God. The letters of proclamation represent religious as well as social dimensions of Roman imperial power under the mask of Satan (12.18–13.18). They illustrate the outcome of Satan's defeat on earth, where he fights a desperate battle fueled by his great wrath. Considering Rev. 12.17, the letters of proclamation, and the multiple exhortations to maintain faith, it becomes quite obvious that the Lamb's victory over Satan implicitly means that all Christians can survive the dangers of the present time. Revelation admonishes its readers to stand against the fallen and seized one.

Conclusion

In Revelation, the figure of Satan, which is not without reason suspect to modern minds,⁹³ is translated through a literary construct into the dangerous loser. Revelation is shaped to give encouragement and exhortation to its addressees, as can be demonstrated from the narrative concept of the figure of Satan. The aim is to combine two opposed realities: the dangers that come with life in a society which the seer views as anti-divine in character, and God's ongoing protection of those who adhere to him. The story brings comfort and, simultaneously, admonishes the addressees to endure the danger by being aware of the eschatological powerlessness of the present powers and their political representatives.

The acts of God and his heavenly allies create an atmosphere of encouragement, since God has already seized anti-divine authority⁹⁴ and will

92 Cf., e.g., Perzoli-Ogliati, *Täuschung und Klarheit*, 141.

93 Cf., e.g., E. Pagels, *The Origin of Satan* (New York: Random House, 1995).

94 Cf., e.g., Thomas, *Magical Motifs*, 144: "The main vision conveyed by John throughout the Apocalypse is that God and Jesus are sovereign rulers of the universe and that nothing occurs outside the realm of their power.... John has created a literary environment in which the tension between what existed and what ought to exist is heightened and clarified. Distinctions are drawn

ultimately assert his rule. The anti-divine power is limited and, consequently, Revelation presents the anti-divine power as a caricature through the eschatological preview in Rev. 20. Showing that political power depends on Satan, a dangerous loser, creates a subversive plot, so that Roman rule can no longer be seen as glorious and powerful. Yet the bound Satan remains a dangerous figure to the addressees of the narrative so long as those addressees permit the anti-divine authority represented by Roman rule to deceive them with its fascinating power. On earth, there is still danger, to which Christians must respond by keeping God's commandments and maintaining the witness for Christ while also drawing a sharp line between themselves and the world outside the community. Maintaining one's witness for Christ and refusing the anti-divine power has consequences for eternal life, consequences that the seer presents in his visions in a radical way.⁹⁵

The point of Revelation's literary conception is not historical speculation about an uncertain future or the development of some kind of chart to outline God's impending actions. Interpreting Revelation as a literary entity created to build meaning (*Sinbildung*) helps one understand the text's concept of Satan. The figure of Satan, whose depiction combines divergent motifs from the Jewish encyclopedia and lacks any detailed determination, is adequate for creating a new construction of meaning. Revelation presents itself as such a new construction,⁹⁶ taking up aspects of tradition, combining some familiar elements, and deleting others that did not fit. The motif of Satan's fall from heaven works as a catalyst for the construction transmitted through the memory of Jesus (cf. Lk. 10.18).

The fact that the seer begins to develop the concept of Satan with the proclamations to the seven communities demonstrates that the seer intends to interpret the situation of his addressees through his use of this figure, giving them a general orientation for their lives and also providing exhortation and admonition. His story develops new insights into good and evil, divine and anti-divine, to allow the readers to understand their experiences from a different perspective. There is a hermeneutical function in the concept of Satan that can thus be seen in providing a glimpse into past time (i.e., the fall of Satan) and into future time (i.e., the final defeat of Satan), all deduced from a perspective on God's actions and God's power. Such a strategy seeks to interpret the present time and to shape each addressee's duties in life according to the claims and the value system developed within the narrative (i.e., how to live in the time of the wrath of Satan). Political authority, described as a

between the rule of God and the rule of Satan, between the rule of Christ and the rule of Caesar, using Symbols representing the rule of each."

⁹⁵ Revelation uses the theme of "resurrection" to establish a counter reality to the addressees' world and, ultimately, to change this reality by reversing the current structures of power; cf. Labahn, "The Resurrection of the Followers of the Lamb."

⁹⁶ Cf., e.g., the volume of Henrike Frey-Arntjes, art. "Satan," WBiL ex. 2008, www.wbillex.de (last accessed May 16, 2009): "Die Konzepte der Satansgestalt weisen im Alten Testament keine einheitliche Linie auf."

Satanic entity, is an actual danger for their present lives, one that threatens the social and physical integrity of the members of the Christian community but that also inspires them to become more sober in following Christ. The Jewish-Christian author of Revelation regards such a situation as effected by the anti-divine power whose actions he identifies as deeds of God's opponent, Satan. This power can only be understood as a besieged one, as presented in the narrative of Revelation. The ultimate power behind Satan is God, who tolerates Satanic deeds (13.7). Creating such a structure, the seer takes the danger of his addressees as a reality and places a high emphasis on the possibility of fighting against this power and calling for resistance. Comfort comes from the conviction that the anti-divine actions derive from an already-besieged power, leading the reader into an awareness of the possibility of surviving the danger and of the need to step voluntarily into a life on the edge of society.