

# Recapitulation in Revelation 4-11

Ekkehardt Mueller  
Biblical Research Institute

In approaching the Book of Revelation, or at least certain sections of the book, one has basically two options. One can choose recapitulation or progression. Opinions on the structure of Revelation and on the delimitation of certain passages determine, to a large degree, whether one opts for one or the other of these two possibilities.

I will briefly define the terms and state the importance of the issue, then move on to modern representatives of recapitulation. Next, I will address the delimitation of crucial passages, and finally list the arguments in favor of recapitulation in Rev 4-11.

## I. Definition of Terms

Recapitulationists perceive several parts of the Apocalypse as somewhat repetitious, and each of these parts seems to lead to the final consummation. In other words, the author repeatedly leads his hearers and readers over the same ground, adding a new perspective each time.

Progression, as opposed to recapitulation, discerns only one final climax in the Book of Revelation. Everything leads up to this culmination. For example, the seven trumpets do not, to a certain extent, cover the same ground which the seven seals have already encircled, but grow out of the seals and are their extension.<sup>1</sup>

## II. Importance of the Issue

Although the issue of recapitulation may seem somewhat academic and complicated, its implications and its practical effects can be tremendous and far-reaching. The question of progression or recapitulation may not matter too much to a preterist, even though preterists often defend recapitulation. However, it is a decisive question for the person maintaining the historical interpretation of the Apocalypse. If one chooses progression one will end up with a different end time scenario from the one recapitulationists hold. Correspondingly, one will place the present time in another frame than would those who prefer recapitulation. This again may influence belief in the nearness of Christ's second coming as well as one's own lifestyle.

## III. Modern Exegetes and the Issue of Recapitulation

It seemed that for some time recapitulation in the Book of Revelation had lost its attractiveness. The concept has been revitalized by Günther Bornkamm.<sup>2</sup> Russell Scott Morton, in discussing different procedures with regard to finding Revelation's macrostructure, distinguishes between source-critical approaches, linguistic/literary analysis, recapitulation theory, and chiasmic approaches,<sup>3</sup> although they do not necessarily exclude each other.

---

<sup>1</sup>See Ekkehardt Müller, *Microstructural Analysis of Revelation 4-11*, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series, Volume 21 (Berrien Springs; Andrews UP, 1996), 12.

<sup>2</sup>See Günther Bornkamm. "Die Komposition der apokalyptischen Visionen in der Offenbarung Johannis," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 36 (1937): 132-149.

<sup>3</sup>Russell Scott Morton. "A History of Religions Analysis of Revelations 4-5" (Th.D. dissertation, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, 1985), 5-38.

Adela Yarbro Collins detects recapitulation in all the visions of the Apocalypse except the first septenary. The recurring pattern in these septet visions is, in her opinion, (1) persecution, (2) judgment, and (3) salvation<sup>4</sup>. The paradigm for these elements of what she calls the combat myth is allegedly Rev 12. She states: “Each cycle of visions tells the story of the end in its own way. The story of the opening of the scroll with seven seals is the whole story of the end. This story is told again in the cycle of the trumpets from another point of view. This repetition is somewhat like that of a musical theme and variations.”<sup>5</sup>

Jan Lambrecht’s main emphasis is the encompassing technique that John uses. This technique allows at the same time for recapitulation and progression. In his view, the septets of the seals and trumpets are open-ended and comprise everything that follows. However, despite the overlap that now occurs, each major block is a unit.<sup>6</sup>

Gerhard Krodel also argues for recapitulation. In Rev 6:12-14, the stars fall down from heaven. “However, the *fourth trumpet* and the *fourth bowl* visions presuppose that the heavenly bodies are still in place (8:12; 16:8). The relationship between the three cycles therefore is thematic, not chronological!” Furthermore, he states: “Recapitulation does not imply mechanical repetition of content, but recapitulation becomes the occasion for *new emphases*.”<sup>7</sup>

Kenneth A. Strand’s chiastic structure of the Apocalypse consists of eight basic visions besides a prologue and an epilogue. Six of the eight visions can be subdivided into a “victorious-introduction scene,” a “basic prophetic description,” an “interlude,” and the “eschatological culmination.”<sup>8</sup> This very arrangement strongly points to recapitulation.

Jon Paulien argues that the protection of certain objects from destruction in Rev 7:1-3 and Rev 9:4 “raises serious questions whether the trumpet series is to be related as an immediate sequel to the vision of chapter 7.” The strongest parallel between Rev 7a and the trumpets is Rev 9:14, 16. In Rev 7a, God’s people are described, “in Rev 9 their demonic counterparts.” Connections between the two passages include the concept of binding and losing, the appearance of four angels, and the concept of numbering a people. “The sixth trumpet is the exact historical counterpart of Revelation 7:1- 8 . . . The seven trumpets, therefore, do not follow the events of Revelation 7 in chronological order.”<sup>9</sup>

Richard M. Davidson points out that the introductory scenes—compared with each other—show progression, whereas the sections to which they belong often present recapitulation.<sup>10</sup>

Although Bruce M. Metzger perceives the seventh seal as an introduction to a new series of visions, he adds: “The trumpets more or less repeat the revelation of the seven seals, though they present it more

---

<sup>4</sup>Adela Yarbro Collins, *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation* (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1976).32-44; idem. “‘What the Spirit Says to the Churches’: Preaching the Apocalypse,” *Quarterly Review* 4 (1984): 73.

<sup>5</sup>Adela Yarbro Collins, *The Apocalypse*, New Testament Message. Biblical-Theological Commentary (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1979), 43.

<sup>6</sup>J. Lambrecht, “A Structuration of Revelation 4,1-22.5,” in *L’Apocalypse johannique et l’apocalyptique dans le Nouveau Testament*, ed. J. Lambrecht. Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium LII (Gembloux: Éditions J. Duculot, 1980), 77-104. Lambrecht’s proposed open-endedness is derived from three points: (1) The seventh seal and the seventh trumpet do not have a specific content. (2) There is no indication for the end of the third woe. (3) A study of the hymnic material suggests the conclusion that Rev 11 :15-19 and 15:1-16:1 belong together as 8:1 and 8:2-5 also do.

<sup>7</sup>Gerhard A. Krodel, *Revelation*, Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989), 190.

<sup>8</sup>See Kenneth A. Strand, “The Eight Basic Visions in the Book of Revelation,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 25 (1987): 107-21.

<sup>9</sup>Jon Pauline, *Decoding Revelation’s Trumpets: Literary Allusions and Interpretations of Revelation 8:7-12*, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series, vol. xi (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews UP, 1988), 196-197.

<sup>10</sup>See Richard M. Davidson, “Sanctuary Typology,” in *Symposium on Revelation—Book I: Introductory and Exegetical Studies*, ed. F. B. Holbrook, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, vol. 6 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1992), 115-116.

from God's standpoint. . . Following this complicated and repetitious pattern, John preserves unity in his work, interlocking the various parts together and at the same time developing his themes. The development, however, is not in a strictly logical fashion, such as we are familiar with in Western writing; it is, rather, a product of the Semitic mind, which runs through the whole picture again and again. Thus, the seven seals and the seven trumpets essentially tell the same thing, each time emphasizing one or another aspect of the whole."<sup>11</sup>

This brief review indicates that the idea of recapitulation in Revelation is not uncommon among modern scholarship. However, the biblical text has to be studied on its own. This is the step we have to turn to.

#### IV. Recapitulation and the Delimitation of Passages

Most scholars would agree that Rev 1 consists of an introduction to the entire Book of Revelation (1:1-8) and a vision that should be regarded as an introduction to the seven letters (1:9-20).<sup>12</sup> This means that the first septet has an introductory scene, a device one will also find with the other major parts of Revelation. There is also a clear-cut end of this first septet at Rev 3:22 and the beginning of a new section with Rev 4:1, although 3:21 already prepares the way for the next section of Revelation.<sup>13</sup>

The question where the seven seals end and where a new block begins, however, is of vital importance, for it has to do with the very issue of recapitulation, and it decisively affects the interpretation of Revelation, as we have already pointed out above.

Several scholars suggest that the seven seals comprise the rest of the book. Out of the seventh seal the other judgment series come forth, at least the seven trumpets.<sup>14</sup> This view is largely dependent on

---

<sup>11</sup>Bruce M. Metzger, *Breaking the Code: Understanding the Book of Revelation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993), 55-56.

<sup>12</sup>For example, Eugenio Corsini, *The Apocalypse: the Perennial Revelation of Jesus Christ*, Good News Studies, vol. 5 (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1983), 62,65; Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "Composition and Structure of the Book of Revelation," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 39 (1977): 364; Martin Karrer, *Die Johannesoffenbarung als Brief: Studien zu ihrem literarischen, historischen und theologischen Ort*, Forschung zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments, vol. 140 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986), 217-219. Kenneth A. Strand, *Interpreting the Book of Revelation: Hermeneutical Guidelines, with Brief Introduction to Literary Analysis*, rev. and enl. ed. (Worthington, OH: Ann Arbor, 1976), 51, perceives the vision of chap. 1 and the seven churches as one unit, but he starts only with 1:11.

<sup>13</sup>See the terms "throne" and "overcomer." Indicators for a new part of Revelation starting with 4: 1 are the following: (1) Rev 4 begins with the formula "after this I saw, and behold" (meta tauta eidon, kai idou.) John sees an open door in heaven and is invited to come up there to learn what will happen "after this" (meta tauta) (4:1). The Book of Revelation contains several structuring formulas. Working through the entire document, one gets the impression that no formula besides "and I saw" (kai eidon) and those derived from it "and I saw, and behold, after this I saw; after this I saw, and behold; and I saw, and I heard" (kai eidon, kai idou; meta touto eidov; meta tauta eidon, kai idou; kai eidon, kai ' kousa) have the same structuring force. "I saw" (eidon) without the conjunction "and" (kai) or without the prepositional phrase "after this/I saw" (meta touto/meta tauta) never occurs at the beginning of a sentence, as the structuring formulas do, and has little or no force as a structuring element. The formulas "and behold" (kai idou) and "and" (kai) "I heard" (kai ' kousa) seem to have some value for structuring passages. They are, however, much weaker than is "and I saw" (kai eidon) and often seem to be dependent on it. Forms of the verb "to see" (eidon) occur in Rev 1, but not at all in Rev 2-3. Yet, even in Rev 1, "and I saw" (kai eidon) and derived forms are not found. The first clear structuring formula comes in Rev 4:1. This is a strong indication that a new section starts with 4:1. (2) In the first chapters of the Apocalypse, a movement from earth to heaven takes place. Rev 1-3 seems to play on earth. In Rev 4, John in the spirit sees heavenly realities, an entire new setting. (3) There is also a change in personages. The churches of Rev 2-3 fade away, and a throne with the one sitting on it, twenty-four elders, and four beings appear. In Rev 5, angels and a lamb are added. (4) Rev 4-5 functions as an introduction to the next septet in the same way that Rev 1:9-20 introduces the first. (5) Compared with the first septet, there is a change of style with the second one. The former uses the style of a letter; in the latter, narrative and hymns occur.

<sup>14</sup>See, for example, Gary G. Cohen, *Understanding Revelation: An Investigation of the Key Interpretational and Chronological Questions Which Surround the Book of Revelation* (Chicago: Moody, 1978), 96; Hans Werner Günther, *Der Nah- und Enderwartungshorizont in der Apokalypse des heiligen Johannes*, Forschung zur Bibel (Würzburg: Echter Verlag,

the interpretation of the silence which occurs when the seventh seal is opened. The question is whether the silence is the climax of the series or whether it forms the introduction to another series.<sup>15</sup>

If the seventh seal reaches up to Rev 8:5 or Rev 8:6, the seven trumpets seem to grow out of the seven seals and are their extension. In the same way, the seven bowls may grow out of the seventh trumpet. In this case, there is not much room for recapitulation. If, on the other hand, the seven seals end with Rev 8:1, a new section starts with 8:2. In this case, one might opt for recapitulation.

Some exegetes suggest a kind of overlap between the end of the seven seals and the beginning of the seven trumpets, using the device of “interlocking” or “intercalation.” This means that the seals series comprises 4:1-8:5 or 4:1-8:6 and the trumpet series 8:2-11:19 or 8:3-11:19.<sup>16</sup>

Among other scholars who perceive Rev 8:1 as the end of the section, irrespective of the question of whether Rev 4-5 is an introduction to the seals only or rather to a larger portion of Revelation,<sup>17</sup> are Strand,<sup>18</sup> Bowman,<sup>19</sup> and Holbrook.<sup>20</sup> According to their interpretation, the septet begins with Rev 4 and ends with 8:1.

Starting with Rev 8:7, the seven trumpets are described as the seals are in Rev 6. What about the section 8:2-6? Indeed, many words are parallel between Rev 4:1-8:1 and Rev 8:2-6.<sup>21</sup> However, some of the words are not important for our purpose. They occur everywhere in Revelation and belong to the common stock of vocabulary in Revelation. They do not indicate progression. Sometimes words are used in a different way and with a different meaning in other places.<sup>22</sup> Some words come in clusters or formulas which

---

1980), 235; Krodell, 150-151; Collins, *The Apocalypse*, 55, supports this view, but she states that “this relationship should not be understood chronologically. . . . The interlocking of the two cycles is a literary device.” See also *ibid.*, 56. Rolf J. Pöhler, “Der literarische Aufbau der Offenbarung des Johannes,” in *Studien zur Offenbarung: Die Bedeutung der drei Engelsbotschaften - heute (Offenbarung 14,6-12)* (Hamburg: Grindelruck, 1988), 1:69-71, suggests what he calls a telescope theory.

<sup>15</sup>See, for example, Richard Fredericks, “A Sequential Study of Revelation 1-14 Emphasizing the Judgment Motif: With Implications for Seventh-day Adventist Apocalyptic Pedagogy” (Ph.D. dissertation, Andrews University, 1987), 185-87, who points to Hab 2:20, Zeph 1:7, Zech 2:13, and consequently understands the silence as a symbol of the “day of the Lord.” See also Jean-Pierre Charlier, *Comprendre l'Apocalypse*, 2 vols. (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1991), 1:194-195. Mathias Rissi, *Was ist und was geschehen soll danach: Die Zeit- und Geschichtsauffassung der Offenbarung des Johannes* (Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1965), 8-11, also connects the silence with the day of the Lord. It is a climax and not a transition to the next septenary. On the other hand, Henry Barclay Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John: The Greek Text with Introduction Notes and Indices* (London: Macmillan, 1917), 107, thinks the OT texts are not relevant with regard to Rev 8:1. Jürgen Roloff, *The Revelation of John: A Continental Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 101-102, states: “In fact, the silence in heaven appears to be a reference to the end-time work of God’s new creation.”

<sup>16</sup>See, for example, Collins, *The Combat Myth*, 16-19; and Leroy C. Spinks, “A Critical Examination of J. W. Bowman’s Proposed Structure of the Revelation,” *Evangelical Quarterly* 50 (1978): 216.

<sup>17</sup>See, for example, Corsini, 118, 161; Michel Gourgues, “‘L’Apocalypse’ ou ‘Les trois apocalypses’ de Jean?” *Science et Esprit* 35 (1983): 304-311; Rissi, 8-11; Ernst R. Wendland, “7 X 7 (X 7): A Structural and Thematic Outline of John’s Apocalypse,” *Occasional Papers in Translation and Textlinguistics: OPTAT* 4 (1990): 376-78; Vester Eugene Wolber, “A Study of the Literary Structure of Revelation as an Aid to Interpretation” (Th.D. dissertation, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1950), 36, 39, 42, 61; and Theodor Zahn, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes*, reprint (Wuppertal: R. Brockhaus Verlag, 1986), 364.

<sup>18</sup>Strand, *Interpreting the Book of Revelation*, 48; *idem*, “The Eight Basic Visions,” 112.

<sup>19</sup>John Wick Bowman, “The Revelation to John: Its Dramatic Structure and Message,” *Interpretation* 9 (1955): 441.

<sup>20</sup>Frank B. Holbrook, “Issues in the Book of Revelation,” *Ministry*, January 1991, 10-11, summarizing a committee statement, declares that Rev 4:1-8:1 belongs to the historical section of Revelation. Rev 8:2-6 forms the introduction to the sequence of the trumpets in the form of an inclusion.

<sup>21</sup>In each case just one reference per section is given: I saw (6:1; 8:2), seven (6:1; 8:2), angels (7:1; 8:2), God (6:9; 8:2), stood (7:11; 8:2) trumpets (4:1; 8:2), another angel (7:2; 8:3), came (6:17; 8:3), altar (6:9, 8:3), having (6:2; 8:3), golden (4:4; 8:3), it was given him (6:2; 8:3) incense (5:8; 8:3), prayers of the saints (5:8; 8:3), every/all (6:15; 8:3), before the throne (4:5; 8:3), hand (6:5; 8:4), took (5:7; 8:5), time (4:5; 8:5), cast (4:10, 8:5), earth (6:4; 8:5), was/were (6:12; 8:5), thunder and voices and flashes of lightning (4:5; 8:5), and earthquake (6:12; 8:5).

<sup>22</sup>For example, the golden altar in Rev 8:3 is not necessarily identical with the altar in Rev. 6:9.

are also found in other parts of Rev.<sup>23</sup> Some may even indicate that a new section has begun.<sup>24</sup> None of this vocabulary can be used to build a case for progression. On the other hand, the terms “altar,” “incense,” and the “prayers of the saints” apparently form an important connection with 4:1-8:1. Nevertheless, Rev 8:2-5(6) does not seem to be part of the seventh seal. It is, rather, the introduction to the next septet.<sup>25</sup> This conclusion is supported by the following evidence:

1. 8:2-6 forms an inclusion<sup>26</sup> which is immediately followed by the individual trumpets:<sup>27</sup>

A Seven angels with seven trumpets (2)  
B Another angel (3-5)  
A' Seven angels with seven trumpets (6)

One might even go further and suggest a more detailed structure of this passage.

A Seven angels with seven trumpets (2)  
B Angel, altar, censer (3a)  
C Incense, prayers of the saints (3b)  
D Altar before the throne (3c)  
C' Incense, prayers of the saints (4)  
B' Angel, censer, altar (5)  
A' Seven angels with seven trumpets (6)

Rev 8:1 does not seem to have a place in this chiastic structure or in the inclusion, if one takes it as such. Obviously it lies outside the boundaries of the passage.

2. In Revelation “and I saw” (kai eidon) oftentimes introduces a new section or at least a new aspect of a vision.<sup>28</sup> In the first six seals, the formula “and I saw” (kai eidon) and related formulas, which seem to come as a package, set off one seal from the following one and are not preceded but followed by the content of the respective seal.

In the seventh seal the content is presented immediately without the vision formula. This formula is only introduced in 8:2. If Rev 8:2-5 belongs to the seventh seal, the pattern that the content follows the vision formula is obviously destroyed. Another option that some persons might want to propose would be to regard the silence as not being the content or not belonging to the content of the seventh seal, taking it instead more as a kind of formula. However, the audition formula occurring with the first four seals, including the statement of what has been heard—a living creature says: “Come!”—differs widely from 8:1. A formula becomes a formula only by repetitive use, not by being used just once. On the other hand, the silence is connected to a time element. Even if we might not precisely understand its meaning, this setting seems to indicate that the idea connected with the time element—in this case the silence in heaven—is

---

<sup>23</sup>For example, “and I saw” (kai eidon) and “and it was given” (kai edoth’)

<sup>24</sup>For example, “and I saw” (kai eidon) and “thunder and voices and flashes of lightning (and earthquake)” (brontai kai phḗnai kai astrapai (kai seismos). The latter enumeration occurs also in 4:5; 11:19; and 16:18 and seems to be used only once per vision in what Strand calls victorious introduction scenes; Strand, “The Eight Basic Visions,” 112-113.

<sup>25</sup>See, for example, Corsini, 171, and Charlier, 1:203. Swete, 109, states: “The whole scene in vv. 3-5 is a prelude to the Seven Trumpets, which now begin to sound.”

<sup>26</sup>See, for example, Adolf Phl, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes, Wuppertaler Studienbibel* (Wuppertal: R. Brockhaus Verlag, 1982), 2:20. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Revelation: Vision of a Just World*, Proclamation Commentaries (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 70, states that the heavenly liturgy in Rev 8:3-5 is sandwiched or intercalated between 8:2 and 8:6-9:21a. Krodol, 194, points to the A-B-A’ structure of Rev 8:2-6.

<sup>27</sup>See, for example, Wendland, 379.

<sup>28</sup>See, for example, Rev 8:13 and the discussion on introductory formulas within footnote 13.

important enough to be regarded as the content of the seventh seal. Since, especially with the fifth and the sixth seal “and I saw” (kai eidon) is used right in the beginning, it might be better to understand “and I saw” (kai eidon) in 8:2 as introducing a new part of the Apocalypse.<sup>29</sup>

**The Four Horsemen**  
Package of introductory formulas

	<i>lamb opens a seal</i>	<i>audition formula</i>	<i>living creature saying</i>	<i>vision formula</i>	<i>Content of the respective seal</i>
First rider <sup>30</sup>	*	*	*	*	*
Second rider	*	*	*	—	*
Third rider	*	*	*	*	* <sup>31</sup>
Fourth rider	*	*	*	*	*

**The Last Three Seals**  
Package of introductory formulas

	<i>vision formula</i>	<i>lamb opens a seal</i>	<i>vision formula</i>	<i>Content of the respective seal</i>
First seal		*	*	*
Sixth seal	*	*		*
Seventh seal		*		*

3. Vision formulas are found throughout the entire seal series. There is no other septet in Rev characterized by “and I saw” (kai eidon) statements as is the vision of the seven seals, including its introductory part. With the trumpets this formula is found only rarely.

4. The seven trumpets start with a common formula, namely “and the . . . angel sounded the trumpet” (kai . . . angelos esalpisen) This formula is prefigured by 8:2 and 6. It is quite different from that of the seals “and when it opened the . . . seal [I heard the . . . living being saying]” (Kai hote ēnoixen tēn sphragida tēn . . . [ēkousa tou . . . zōou legontos]) which draws on Rev 4-5. Instead of viewing the trumpets as coming out of the last seal, it seems to be more appropriate to perceive Rev 4-5 and Rev 8:2-6 as introductory scenes providing the vocabulary for the introductory formulas used with each element of the respective septet.

5. In comparing septenaries it is often helpful to take a look at the particular personnel that appear. The vision of 4:1-8:1 is dominated by the lamb, four living creatures, and twenty-four elders. The lamb is found ten times within the seal series, but not at all with the trumpets. In the seals, angels are only

<sup>29</sup>See E. Müller, 200-201, 317-325, and 422-423. The possible argument that in 5:5-6—within the same vision—John hears about a lion yet sees a lamb, so the same technique must be applied to the seventh seal—John “hears” the silence but sees the seven angels with seven trumpets and therefore the trumpets have to be included into the seventh seal—does not seem to be valid. Lion and lamb refer to the same reality, the same person. The silence in heaven and the blowing of the trumpets with the effects on earth obviously do not.

<sup>30</sup>The very first occurrence of the vision formula in 6:1 has been omitted here since it sets off the actual opening of the seals from the heavenly scene in Rev 5 which, together with Rev 4, forms an extended introduction scene to the seal septet.

<sup>31</sup>Another audition formula has been added here.

introduced later (Rev 5 and Rev 7). There are four angels in 7:1-2, not seven as in 8:2, 6.<sup>32</sup> Right at the beginning of the seals the four living creatures and the lamb are found, whereas in the case of the trumpets angels are mentioned. Since no angels occur in the first six seals, with the exception of the expansion of the sixth seal—a special case in itself—one probably should not expect to find them in the seventh seal. In other words, the personnel in the two septets are quite different. This is also true if one leaves the heavenly sphere. The trumpets seem to focus on the earth dwellers (8:13). In the case of the seals the focus seems to be somewhat more on the people of God.<sup>33</sup> This evidence would support recapitulation.

6. “Thunder, voices, flashes of lightning” (brontai kai phçnai kai astrapai) depictions of theophany, as well as “incense” (thumiamata) in connection with “prayers of the saints” (proseuchais tçn hagiçn) are only found in the introductory scene Rev 4-5, not in the seals themselves. The three-fold enumeration of natural phenomena is again used in the introductory scene of Rev 11:19.<sup>34</sup> It would be fitting to find these items in another introductory scene and not in an extension of the seventh seal. Although there are some literary connections between Rev 8:2-6 and the seals,<sup>35</sup> as indicated above, they cannot prevent one from viewing Rev 8:2-6 as an introductory scene to the seven trumpets. The different introductory scenes of the main visions of Revelation are apparently temple scenes. Therefore—in spite of all differences between them—one has to expect common elements and even progression if one takes these scenes by themselves.

7. Since Rev 8: 1 is introduced by neither “I saw”(kai eidon) nor “I heard” (kai ' kousa), it seems that this verse has a very close relation to the preceding material, which points to the Christ’s Second Coming “sixth seal” (parousia) and perceives God’s people as already standing before His throne (Rev 7:15). The climax has been reached. With the sixth seal, not only the heavenly signs pointing to Jesus’ second coming have been fulfilled. The day of the Lord itself has come. The expansion of the sixth seal, namely Rev 7, answers the question at the very end of the sixth chapter: “Who is able to stand?” and describes the persons who will be found before God’s throne, led by the lamb to the water of life. The seventh seal adds silence in heaven. So, the seals lead up to the final consummation. Having reached Christ’s second coming, the Millennium, judgment, and new creation, a return to the old earth as described by the effects of the trumpets does not make sense if understood chronologically. If Rev 8:2-6—which draws with it Rev 8-9—would be connected with 8:1, the progression of Rev 6-7 up to 8:1 would be reversed and the climax destroyed. There seems to be a movement from heaven to earth and back to heaven in order to reach the final consummation, as pointed out in both septenaries.

### Basic Locations in Rev 4:1-8:1 and in Rev 8:2-11:18

<b>Heaven</b>	<b>Earth</b>	<b>Heaven</b>
Rev 4-5	Rev 6:1-7:8	Rev 7:9-8:1
thunder, voices,	6 seals	part of the 6 <sup>th</sup>
flashes of lightning;		seal, 7 <sup>th</sup> seal;
incense		<i>climax</i>

<sup>32</sup>Seven angels are mentioned in 15:1, 6-8; 16:1; 17:1; and 21:9.

<sup>33</sup>See especially the fifth seal.

<sup>34</sup>Actually, each time thunder, voices, and flashes of lightning are enumerated and augmentation takes place. Three elements are found in Rev 4:5. Rev. 8:5 adds earthquakes. In Rev. 11:19 a fifth element is stated, namely a great hail (chalaza megal'). See also Rev. 16:18-21.

<sup>35</sup>For example, an altar is mentioned in Rev 6:9 as well as in Rev 8:3. Yet the altar of 6:9 is not characterized as the golden altar, as is the case in 8:3, and might refer to the altar of burnt offering. The martyrs are found there, but no incense. Furthermore, the blood of the martyrs and the death of other saints are mentioned.

**Heaven**  
Rev 8:2-6  
thunder, voices,  
trumpet,  
flashes of lightning,  
earthquake; incense

**Earth**  
Rev 8:7-11:14  
6 trumpets

**Heaven**  
Rev 11:12, 15-18  
part of the 6<sup>th</sup>  
trumpet,  
7<sup>th</sup> trumpet;  
*climax*

8. Both visions, Rev 4:1-8:1 and Rev 8:2-11:18, seem to form a kind of chiasmic structure in themselves. In the first one, the lamb is the center of attention. In Rev 8:2-11:18, angels are very important. Rev 4:1-2a sets the stage for Rev 4—8a. Rev 8:1, on the other hand, concludes the vision. Although both passages are small, there are a number of similarities between Rev 4:1-2a and Rev 8:1. The terms “to open,” (anoigō) “as/like” and “to be/become” (ginomai) occur in both passages. Furthermore, the prepositional phrase “in heaven” (en tō ouranō) is found in both texts.<sup>36</sup> In Rev 4:1-2a, a door in heaven was opened, and a voice talked to John. In Rev 8:1, the seventh seal was opened, and there was silence in heaven for a limited time. These two passages are a fitting frame for the vision of Rev 4- 7. Their similarities and their contrasts both prepare the way for the vision and conclude it. When the consummation has come, no further speech is necessary. Wendland calls 4:1-8:1 “a contrastive inclusion.”<sup>37</sup>

Scholars propose an outline of this septet that consists of (1) an introduction (Rev 4-5), (2) six seals (Rev 6; four plus two plus later one more), (3) an interlude (Rev 7), and (4) the seventh seal (Rev 8:1).<sup>38</sup> This study suggests the elements printed below. At the same time, as at least partially indicated by this outline, Rev 4:1-8:1 seems to form a kind of chiasmic structure with regard to the occurrence of hymns and the place of action.<sup>39</sup>

### **The Structure of Rev 4:1-8:1**

- (1) Prelude or general introduction (heavenly setting—4:1-2a)
- (2) Introductory scene (heavenly setting—4:2a-5: 14)
  - (a) Throne vision (including hymns—4:2b-11)
  - (b) The vision of the lamb and the scroll (including hymns—5)
- (3) The seven seals (6:1-8:1)
  - (a) The four horsemen (6:1-8)
  - (b) The fifth seal (6:9-11)

---

<sup>36</sup>The only other places in this part of Revelation in which this phrase is employed are Rev 5:3 and Rev 5:13.

<sup>37</sup>Wendland 378.

<sup>38</sup>See, for example, Günther, 162, although he takes only 5:1 to 8:1 as a section; Strand, “The Eight Basic Visions,” 112; and Wendland, 376-78. Ferdinand Han, “Zum Aufbau der Johannesoffenbarung” in *Kirche und Bibel: Festgabe für Bischof Eduard Schick*, ed. Otto Böcher et al. (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1979), 153, however, regards 6:12-7:8 as the sixth seal, whereas 7:9-17 contains a prospect of the consummation. Charlier, 1:197, proposes a detailed chiasmic structure reaching from A to H and to A’.

<sup>39</sup>Charlier, 1:150, suggests another chiasmic structure:

- A Vision inaugurale (5,1-14)
- B Les quatre premiers sceaux (6,1-8)
- C Le cinquième sceau (6,9-11)
- B’ Le sixième sceau (6,12-7,8)
- A’ La liturgie de clôture (7,9-8,1).



- (c) The sixth seal (6:12-7:17)
  - (i) The seal proper (6:12-17)
  - (ii) First expansion: the 144,000 (7:1-8)
  - (iii) Second expansion: the great multitude (heavenly setting, including hymns—7:9-17)
- (d) The seventh seal as conclusion (heavenly setting—8:1)

The large picture, drawn in Rev 4:1-8:1, starts with God and the Lamb and with praises given to them. It ends in the same way, namely with the Lamb and God and the praises given to them, for the goal is achieved: God's servants are with him and he is with them. The lamb is their shepherd, leading them to all the resources of an abundant life.

### **The Chiastic Structure of Rev 4:1-8:1**

- A Prelude or general introduction: heavenly setting (4:1-2a)
- B Introductory scene: heavenly setting, hymns (4:2a-5:14)
- C The first six seals, including the first expansion of the sixth seal (6:1-7:8)
- B' The second expansion of the sixth seal: heavenly setting, hymns (7:9-17)
- A' The seventh seal as conclusion: heavenly setting (8:1)

9. In Rev 7:3 the earth, the sea, and the trees are not harmed. This is quite different from the first trumpet in 8:7, where a third of the earth and a third of the trees are burned up. Representatives of the idea of progression point to this fact. However, in 9:4, when the fifth trumpet is blown, the earth and the trees are protected.<sup>40</sup>

10. Under the sixth seal the stars fall to the earth. The idea of stars is found again with the trumpets. They are still in their place up to the fourth trumpet, when they are struck.<sup>41</sup>

11. The term "prayers of the saints," already mentioned, is found only twice in Revelation, namely in 5:8 and in 8:3-4. These two passages seem to be parallel insofar as they are introduction scenes to basic visions of the Apocalypse.

12. The phrase "I heard their number" is found only in 7:4 and in 9:16. In the first case, it belongs to the expansion of the sixth seal. In the other case, it is part of the sixth trumpet. Looking at their respective contexts one detects the same ideas: holding back and releasing, four angels, and a crowd which is numbered. In Rev 7 the people of God are depicted, and in Rev 9 their demonic counterpart. Therefore it seems that the sixth trumpet is the exact historic antagonist to the expansion of the sixth seal in Rev 7a.<sup>42</sup>

### **IV. Some Additional Arguments in Favor of Recapitulation**

1. The seal septet seems to start with the time of John. The twofold introductory scene in Rev 4-5 obviously points to Jesus' enthronement in heaven, which took place in 31 A.D. As already briefly hinted at above, this septet reaches even beyond Christ's second coming. Thus it covers the entire Christian time span. The vision following the seven trumpets has been referred to as the vision on the satanic trinity. It starts

---

<sup>40</sup>See, for example, Jon Paulien, "Seals and Trumpets: Some Current Discussions," in *Symposium on Revelation-Book I: Introductory and Exegetical Studies*, ed. F. B. Holbrook, Daniel and Revelation Committee, vol. 6 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1992), 196.

<sup>41</sup>See, for example, Krodel, 190.

<sup>42</sup>See, for example, Paulien, "Seals and Trumpets" 196-197.

with a woman giving birth to a male child. The reference is undoubtedly to the birth of the Messiah. The vision mentions the three and a half times of Dan 7 and 12 and again covers the Christian period, including the medieval conflict as well as the end time persecution and the “*parousia*”. Therefore the question is not whether the Apocalypse uses recapitulation—this issue is clear—but whether the trumpets recapitulate the seals. In any case, recapitulation in the Book of Revelation cannot be negated categorically. It would be possible that it also applies to the trumpets. The above mentioned reasons foster this view.

2. Within the trumpet series several chronological statements are found. With regard to these time elements the trumpet septet is much more structured than the seals are. The prophetic time elements of chapter 11 which are part of the expansion of the sixth trumpet point to a long historic development and especially focus on the end of this time span, namely around 1798 A.D. Since the trumpets evidently come in a chronological order, the first trumpets obviously precede this time and therefore seem to be more or less parallel to the seals. In any case, the trumpets contain the 1260 prophetic days.

3. An exposition of the seven seals demonstrates that the seals imitate the Synoptic Apocalypse in Matt 24 and its parallels. The difference is that the seals seem to concentrate on the spiritual dimension. If the Synoptic Apocalypse, with its climax of Christ’s second coming, is found in Rev 6:1 to 8:1, there is no room left for partial judgments that are meant to lead persons to repentance (9:20-21), because the “*parousia*” has already happened before the trumpets are sounded, and after the “*parousia*” one has only to expect the final and universal judgment.

4. A strong relation between the Book of Revelation and the Book of Daniel must be recognized. Both the seal vision and the trumpet vision allude to certain passages of Daniel. Both books belong to the same type of literature, namely, apocalyptic prophecy. These are the only predominantly apocalyptic books in the whole Bible. Thus there might be a certain similarity or correspondence between them. The Book of Daniel undeniably contains recapitulation. Since the Book of Revelation depends on the Book of Daniel, we might also expect recapitulation in the case of the Apocalypse. In Daniel one series adds additional elements to the preceding one. Whereas Dan 2 discusses the political dimension—that is, the kingdoms of the world—Dan 7 adds a religious dimension, namely, the saints, and Dan 8 adds another spiritual dimension, namely, the sanctuary. Recapitulation in Revelation seems to follow this pattern by adding new aspects to formerly revealed historical developments. With the trumpets, these new facets include the different time elements and the emphasis on those who dwell on the earth.

## **Conclusion**

In this paper I have wrestled with the question of recapitulation in Revelation, especially with regard to the seven trumpets. A very important question was the delimitation of the seventh seal. Since the seventh seal can be limited to Rev 8:1 and since other reasons favor recapitulation, one is not forced to regard the seven trumpets as extensions of the last seal. On the contrary, recapitulation in the case of the seals and trumpets seems to be a reasonable option. This is decisive for the interpretation of the seals and the trumpets. Suggesting that Rev 8:1 is the content of the seventh seal, however, does not mean that 8:2-5(6) is totally disconnected from the preceding material. The passage seems to look back to a certain degree at the previous chapters and at the same time look forward to the next main part, serving as a kind of joint in the larger structure of Revelation (cf. 3, 21; 11, 18). This literary connection, however, does not necessarily point to a chronological sequence of seals and trumpets.

## Appendix: The End of the Trumpet Septet

The seven trumpets start with Rev 8:7. Each trumpet is clearly identified. The last trumpet begins with Rev 11: 15. The question, however, is where the trumpets end. Several suggestions, sometimes related, have been made:

(1) Many scholars take Rev 11:19 as the end point of the trumpet vision or as the end of the first part of the Book of Revelation. This option does not necessarily exclude the view that the seventh trumpet includes other parts or the rest of Revelation.<sup>43</sup>

(2) Some suggest Rev 11:18 as the end point of the trumpet septet. Consequently, Rev 11:19 is the introductory scene to a new cycle whose main part starts with 12:1.<sup>44</sup>

(3) Others propose that Rev 11:19 at the same time closes one vision and opens another one.<sup>45</sup>

(4) Finally, the suggestion is made that the seventh trumpet extends from Rev 11:15 to Rev 13:18<sup>46</sup> or even further.<sup>47</sup>

In any case, there is almost general agreement that something new starts with Rev 12. A woman and a dragon are introduced in Rev 12. In Rev 13, the dragon empowers a beast from the sea. Then a beast from the earth arises and instigates the inhabitants of the earth to establish an image of the beast. The dragon and the beasts belong together and form a counter-trinity. The woman is opposed to that trinity. Clearly,

---

<sup>43</sup>See, for example, Collins, *The Combat Myth*, 26, 36, who takes Rev 11:19 as the end point of the material associated with the scroll of Rev 5; Desmond Ford, *Crisis! A Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, 3 vols. (Newcastle, CA: Desmond Ford Pub, 1982), 2:504, 548; Wayne Richard Kempson, "Theology in the Revelation of John" (Ph.D. dissertation, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1982), 119, 123, 140; and Richard C. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John's Revelation* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1963), 357-358. Isbon T. Beckwith, *The Apocalypse of John: Studies in Introduction with a Critical and Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1967), 611, states: "The two parts of v. 19 correspond then with the two parts of v. 18. . . . This verse is often taken as introductory to chapt. 12; but its connection with that scene, which forms a new and quite distinct vision, is much less immediate than with the preceding." Roloff, 103-104, 138-140, states on p. 139: "A large caesura lies between 11:19 and 12:1. . . . In 11:19, the first part of the visions has reached its end. . . . This series of visions beginning with 12:1 is not a continuation, but a complementary supplement of everything heretofore. John makes a fresh beginning to portray the end event from a different perspective." See also Barbara Wootten Snyder, "Combat Myth in the Apocalypse: The Liturgy of the Day of the Lord and the Dedication of the Heavenly Temple" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California at Berkeley, 1991), 97. James Valentine, "Theological Aspects of the Temple Motif in the Old Testament and Revelation" (Ph.D. dissertation, Boston University, 1985), declares on pp. 265-266: "Rev. 11:19 is the climax of all of chs. 1-11, but especially of chs. 4-5. . . . Just as in 4:1ff, the author is able to see the throne through the open door in the heavenly temple, so in 11:19 the temple in heaven is opened and the ark of the covenant is seen. . . . A new prophecy begins at 12:1." On p. 270, he remarks: "Rev. 11:19 forms an inclusion with 4: 1ff, bringing to a climactic end the first half of the book." See further, Robert W. Wall, *Revelation*, New International Biblical Commentary, vol. 18 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 155.

<sup>44</sup>See, for example, Alfred Loisy, *L'Apocalypse de Jean* (Frankfurt: Minerva, 1972), 221; C. Mervyn Maxwell, *God Cares*, vol. 2 (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1985), 58-61, 309-310; Paul S. Minear, *I Saw a New Earth: An Introduction to the Visions of the Apocalypse* (Washington, DC: Corpus, 1968), 96-97, 105, 114, 117; Strand, "The Eight Basic Visions," 114; John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ: A Commentary*. (Chicago: Moody, 1966), 186; Wendland, 378, 380; and Michael Wilcock, *The Message of Revelation: I Saw Heaven Opened*. The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1975), 110.

<sup>45</sup>See, for example, M. Robert Mulholland, *Revelation: Holy Living in an Unholy World* (Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury P of Zondervan, 1990), 211, 214. Henry Alford, *The Greek Testament: with a Critically Revised Text: a Digest of Various Readings: Marginal References to Verbal and Idiomatic Usage: Prolegomena: and a Critical and Exegetical Commentary. For the Use of Theological Students and Ministers. In Four Volumes. Vol. IV. Part II. Containing the Epistles of St. John and St. Jude, and the Revelation*, 3d ed. (London: Rivingstons, 1866), 666, calls it "concluding and transitional."

<sup>46</sup>See Hahn, 154. Charlier, 1:204-205, 256-257, takes this decision, but in his opinion, "la septième trompette introduit quatre séquences" (256). The first consists of Rev 11:15-12:12 and has the following elements:

A Liturgy (11:15-18)

B Vision (11:19-12:9)

A' Liturgy (12:10-12).

<sup>47</sup>See the discussion on the third woe in E. Müller, 383-385.

this is a new part of Revelation. The major evil powers enter the scene. Later in Revelation, they will exit in reversed order (Rev 17-20).

However, another significant feature indicates that a new part of the book starts. It is a literary device, namely, the structuring vision formula. The importance of the formula “and I saw” (kai eidon) has already been stressed. Yet, at the end of Rev 11 and the beginning of Rev 12, the aorist passive of “to see” (horaō) instead of the aorist active is used to designate a new section. It is the formula “it was seen” (kai ōphthē). This formula occurs just three times in Revelation: Rev 11:19; 12:1; and 12:3.<sup>48</sup>

Thus, a new part of Revelation starts with Rev 12—actually with Rev 11: 19, for it is introduced by Rev 11:19.<sup>49</sup> The unique formula “it was seen” (kai ōphthē) connects Rev 11:19 with Rev 12. A further link between Rev 11:19 and Rev 12:1-3 is the phrase “in heaven” (en tō ouranō) in Rev 11:19; 12:1; and 12:3.

Taking a closer look at Rev 11:19, one detects that this verse is a fitting introduction to the next major part of Revelation. Rev 4-5, the introduction to the seven seals, reports a throne scene. According to Rev 7:15, throne and temple are related and belong together. Thus, indirectly the heavenly temple is in view in Rev 4-5. The same is true for Rev 8:2-6, the introductory scene to the seven trumpets. Utensils of the sanctuary are mentioned in this passage, and in Rev 9:13 the golden altar is still seen. Rev 11:19 uses the word “temple” (naos) twice. John is allowed to see the innermost part of the heavenly sanctuary containing the ark of the covenant. All three introductory scenes have their setting in the heavenly temple and influence the respective subsequent visions.

Yet, there are two more connections between the introductory scenes. The phrase “And God’s temple in heaven was opened, and it was seen. . .” in Rev 11:19 reminds one of Rev 4:1: “After this I saw and behold a door was opened in heaven”.<sup>50</sup> In Rev 4: 1, John sees in a vision an open door in heaven. In Rev 11:19, the temple in heaven is opened, and John sees a vision.

Furthermore, four of the five elements mentioned in Rev 11:19, namely flashes of lightning, voices, thunders, earthquake, and a heavy hail, also occur in Rev 8:5. Only the hail is missing there. Three of them—flashes of lightning, voices, and thunders—are found in Rev 4:5. These elements are thus fitting components of introductory scenes. An intensification takes place, however, the farther one gets in the Apocalypse. Therefore more elements are mentioned with each major part of Revelation.<sup>51</sup>

The introductory scene Rev 11:19 is linked to the succeeding material by the formula “and it was seen” (kai ōphthē) and the phrase “in heaven” (en tō ouranō). Thereby one knows that a new section has started and that the trumpets end with Rev 11:18. On the other hand, Rev 11:19 is not totally identical with the next few verses, otherwise it could not function as an introductory vision, or this vision would also comprise the next few verses. But Rev 11:19 is different from Rev 12:1 and Rev 12:3, because the term “sign” (sēmeion) is only applied to the two latter verses. Furthermore, the focus of Rev 11: 19 is on an object—the ark of the covenant—whereas with Rev 12:1 and Rev 12:3 the focus is on living creatures, a woman and a dragon.

---

<sup>48</sup>It seems that Charlier, 1:263, and J. Ramsey Michaels, *Interpreting the Book of Revelation, Guides to New Testament Exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 63, are the only ones, besides this study, who have made this observation.

<sup>49</sup>See, for example, François Rousseau, *L'Apocalypse et le milieu prophétique du Nouveau Testament: Structure et préhistoire du texte* (Tournai: Desclée, 1971), 196.

<sup>50</sup>See also Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 1-7: An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1992), 335.

<sup>51</sup>See Lambrecht, 93-94.

## The Beginning of the Fourth Part of Revelation

Scene	Vision	Concept	Prelude	Focus	Location
Scene 1: (11:19)	“and it was seen” (kai ōphthē)		temple opened: the ark of the covenant	“in heaven” (en tō ouranō)	
Scene 2: (12:1-2)	“it was seen” (ōphthē)		a great sign: a woman clothed with the sun	“in heaven” (en tō ouranō)	
Scene 3: (12:3)	“it was seen” (kai ōphthē) “and behold” (kai idou)		another sign: a great red dragon	“in heaven” (en tō ouranō)	

In addition, the term “the one that is to come” (ho erchomenos) —occurring elsewhere in Revelation in the tripartite formula of the divine name “who is and who was and who is to come”<sup>52</sup>— is omitted in Rev 11:17. That in this verse God is designated only as the one “who is and who was” points to the fact that he now has come and that the end of world history has arrived. Since the consummation cannot be surpassed, a new part of Revelation must start with the end of Rev 11. At the same time, Rev 11: 18 summarizes final events that are described more extensively in the following chapters of Revelation. In other words, although several parts of Revelation can definitely be delimited, they nevertheless are not unrelated to the rest of Revelation. One part of Revelation paves the way for the next part.<sup>53</sup> Recapitulation takes place.

In conclusion, the seven trumpets apparently start with Rev 8:2 and end with Rev 11:18. Rev 11:19 already belongs to the next part, functioning as an introductory sanctuary scene.

The usual outline suggested for the third septet in the Book of Revelation consists of (1) an introduction (Rev 8:2-6), (2) six trumpets (Rev 8:7-9:21; 4+2+ later 1 more), (3) a twofold interlude (Rev 10 and Rev 11:1-13), and (4) the seventh trumpet (Rev 11: 15-19).<sup>54</sup> The outline of this study does not differ substantially from the one just mentioned.

<sup>52</sup>For example, in Rev 1:4,8; 4:8.

<sup>53</sup>For example, at the end of Rev 3 an open door and the throne of God occur, found again in Rev 4-5. The fifth seal contains elements pointing to Rev 8:2-6. Leonard L. Thompson, “The Mythic Unity of the Apocalypse,” in *Society of Biblical Literature 1985 Seminar Papers*, ed. Kent Harold Richards (Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1985), 21-24, in an important article, opts for “soft boundaries” in Revelation. He notes: “Although the seer marks his boundaries well, often as battle lines, those boundaries are not hard and impenetrable borders over which nothing passes. Rather they are ‘soft’ boundaries through which transformations or modulations occur” (21).

<sup>54</sup>See, for example, Gourgues, 313; D. W. Hadorn, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes*, Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament, vol. 13 (Leipzig: A. Deichertsche Verlagsbuchhandlung D. Werner Scholl, 1928), 99; Alan Johnson, “Revelation,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 12:414; George E. Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 15-16; and Ulrich B. Müller, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes*, Ökumenischer Taschenbuchkommentar zum Neuen Testament, vol. 19 (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1984), 8-9. Barbara Wootten Snyder, 89-98, tries to see a broader picture and therefore goes beyond the limitations of this septenary. On p. 89, she suggests a chiasm which reaches from Rev 10 to Rev 13 as well as a “parallelism”—as she calls it—reaching from Rev 10 to 12. She perceives a major break in the book between Rev 11 and 12 (*ibid.*, 98). Furthermore, the opposition between the mighty angel in 10 and the dragon points toward the tentative conclusion that the angel is the Lamb (*ibid.*, 91-92).

At the same time, Rev 8:2-11:18 seems to form a chiastic structure<sup>55</sup> with regard to the place of action (see below). The septet starts in heaven and ends in heaven. The introduction and the seventh trumpet have a heavenly setting while also mentioning the earth. The remaining six trumpets have an earthly setting. Taking, however, a closer look, one can notice certain movements. In the first four trumpets, a movement from heaven to earth is discernable. This corresponds with the sixth trumpet and its expansion. In the fifth trumpet, a movement from abyss to earth can be found. However, the sixth trumpet, including the expansion, surpasses the first four insofar as it also contains a reversed movement, namely, from earth to heaven. It even briefly hints at a movement from abyss to earth, fully developed within the fifth trumpet.

### **The Structure of Rev 8:2-11:18**

- (1) Introductory scene (heavenly setting—8:2-6)
- (2) The seven trumpets (8:7-11:18)
  - (a) The first four trumpets (8:7-12)
  - (b) The three woes (8:13-11:18)
    - (i) First transitional statement (8: 13)
    - (ii) The fifth trumpet (9:1-11)
    - (iii) Second transitional statement (9: 12)
    - (iv) The sixth trumpet (9:13-11:13).
      - The trumpet proper (9:13-21).
      - First expansion: John and the scroll (10:1-11).
      - Second expansion: measuring of the temple, two witnesses (partly heavenly setting—11:1-13)
    - (v) Third transitional statement (11:14)
    - (vi) The seventh trumpet as conclusion (heavenly setting—11:15-18)

### **The Chiastic Structure of Rev 8:2-11:18**

- |    |  |
|----|--|
| A  | Introductory scene: Heavenly scene, but the earth is mentioned (8:2-6; voices)                           |
| B  | The first four trumpets: Movement from heaven to earth (8:7-12)  |
| C  | Fifth trumpet: Movement from abyss to earth (9:1-11)   |
| B' | The sixth trumpet and its expansion: Movement from heaven to earth and from earth to heaven (9:13-11:13) |
| A' | The seventh trumpet as conclusion: Heavenly scene, but the earth is mentioned (11:15-18; voices)         |

---

<sup>55</sup>Charlier, 1:205-206, also suggests a chiastic structure. In his opinion, the boundaries of this septenary comprise Rev 8:2-14:5. By counting the verses, he finds Rev 11:8 right in the middle of the septenary, dealing with the crucifixion of the Lord. Thus, the center of the chiasm is to be located in Rev 11:1-14, entitled death and resurrection.