

***A Sociorhetorical Interpretation
of Revelation 14:6-13
A Call to Act Justly toward
the Just and Judging God***

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Sociorhetorical interpretation offers an integrated system of analysis promoting rich exploration of a biblical text in terms of its literary and rhetorical textures, its conversations with other available "texts," the social and cultural contexts of its audience, and the ideologies of author and interpreter. In this paper, Rev 14:6-13 is analyzed across the full spectrum of sociorhetorical interpretation in an attempt to discover at each level of the text how John leads his audiences to a certain perception of their surrounding world and how he persuades them to accept his guidance for their responses to that world.

Key Words: Revelation, rhetoric, intertextuality, social-scientific interpretation, culture, ideology, Roman Empire

INTRODUCTION: THE PROMISE OF
SOCIORHETORICAL COMMENTARY

In 1996, two books were released in which Vernon Robbins laid out in its fullest form the program of sociorhetorical investigation.¹ These books articulate what is perhaps the richest and most fully interdisciplinary strategy for the exegesis of an ancient text. Sociorhetorical interpretation leads the interpreter through a programmatic exploration of a text, a text's conversations with other texts, the way a text orients its readers toward their world, and the way a text advances its author's objectives. These investigations, resulting in richly textured observations about the text being explored, are all pursued in an environment which calls for the integration of the results of

1. Vernon K. Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse* (London: Routledge, 1996); *Exploring the Texture of Texts* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity, 1996).

this research. Both its interdisciplinary focus and its commitment to integration of the study of literary, rhetorical, social, intertextual, ideological, and theological aspects of a text make sociorhetorical interpretation more than the sum of its parts.

I have found sociorhetorical interpretation to be particularly helpful in that it presses me to explore a text from angles in addition to those toward which I naturally gravitate. In the pages which follow, I present a sociorhetorical interpretation of Rev 14:6-13. I begin with a presentation of the situations addressed by John, the goals John has for his audiences, and the ideological battles he must fight along the way to achieving those goals. With that orientation serving as a point of reference, I explore the passage in light of (almost) the entire program laid out in Robbins's interpretive analytic. As each aspect of each texture is explored, I try to show how that particular subtexture is interacting with other layers of the text and contributing both to John's communication of his view of the world and to his strategy for moving his audiences to accept and respond out of that view of their world. This procedure seeks to keep the two strengths of socio-rhetorical interpretation operative, namely, displaying the richness of a particular texture while at the same time entering into dialogue with elements of other textures. Sociorhetorical interpretation also calls for an analysis of ideology in the history of interpretation and modes of intellectual discourse. I have therefore used the customary critical apparatus of footnotes both for references to the broader conversations among scholars and for explorations of the relationship between the individual scholar's ideological and social location and the positions he or she takes. I conclude the paper with an integrated reading of Rev 14:6-13, attempting to bring together the fruits of the exploration of all five textures (inner texture, intertexture, social and cultural texture, ideological texture, and sacred texture) to illumine the meaning and strategy of the passage.

As interpreters work programmatically through sociorhetorical investigation of texts, they will find that the "program" can grow. That is to say, the method is not close ended but always open to being enriched by other methods across a wide variety of disciplines. One should expect that the next decade of work in sociorhetorical interpretation will produce many refinements and add many elements to the investigation of each texture—particularly social and cultural texture and ideological texture—as the models from the disciplines of sociology, sociology of knowledge, and anthropology continue to be refined and reworked for application to New Testament texts. This approach promises to move the guild back toward integration of the various specializations. While these specializations have greatly enhanced our appreciation for the rich complexities of interpretation,

Robbins has sounded a timely call to move back toward cooperation among and communication between practitioners of the various specializations.

THE SETTING AND IDEOLOGICAL PROGRAM OF REVELATION

Revelation was written to seven Christian communities in Asia Minor toward the end of Domitian's reign (81-96 CE) by a visionary named John, whom Christian tradition identifies with John the son of Zebedee and apostle of Jesus (an identification which is, however, still debated among critical scholars on the basis of internal evidence and comparisons with other Johannine literature).² John appears to have intimate knowledge of the seven churches to which he writes, which has suggested plausibly that he had prior acquaintance with them and may even have considered them his special charge. The genre of apocalypse, a very serviceable vehicle for deconstructing and reconstructing views of reality, allows God, Jesus, and other spirit beings to emerge as the inscribed authors of the text, while John is merely the vehicle for this revelation. This endowing of John's voice with the authority and credibility of divine voices is an essential means to his objectives—namely, moving his audiences to view their contemporary social realities in a certain way (e.g., Rome and the imperial cult) and to respond to them as John directs (e.g., avoidance of any accommodating tendencies such as participation in idolatrous cults).³

2. See A. Y. Collins, "Dating the Apocalypse of John," *BR* 26 (1981) 33-45; idem, *Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984) 25-83; D. A. deSilva, "The Social Setting of the Apocalypse of John: Conflicts within, Fears Without," *WTJ* 54 (1992) 273-302; D. E. Aune, "The Social Matrix of the Apocalypse of John," *BR* 26 (1981) 16-32; R. H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation* (rev. ed.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998) 15-21; L. L. Thompson, *The Book of Revelation: Apocalypse and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990) 12-17.

3. The precise nature of the apocalyptic genre—more precisely, the process by which an apocalypse comes to be written—remains a debated issue among scholars. One position suggests that an apocalypse is, in effect, a record of a genuine ecstatic experience, a sort of transcript of what transpires in a vision. While few would thus defend 4 Ezra or 2 *Baruch*, it becomes important for many to maintain that Daniel and Revelation came into being in this way. Another position focuses on apocalypticism as a scribal phenomenon, essentially an activity of scriptural interpretation and reapplication. Based on my study of oral-scribal intertexture in Revelation, it is difficult for me not to have sympathy for this latter view and regard John's apocalypse as an inspired interpretation not only of the Jewish Scriptures but also of John's churches' situations in light of John's knowledge of God's character, standards, and righteous claims on humanity. I would affirm that the authority, inspiration, and reliability of the Apocalypse of John is in no way compromised by this position. If we should decide to read Revelation in light of the broader corpus of apocalypses, finding the visionary medium to reflect the literary genre rather than the process of production, we may

The seven oracles in chaps. 2 and 3, combined with other literary and archaeological evidence concerning the seven cities⁴ and the churches in them (e.g., letters from Paul or Ignatius of Antioch) provide a detailed picture of the tensions and challenges facing these Christian communities. Indeed, one is immediately struck by the different life situations faced by the churches, and in many cases the different challenges present within a single congregation, such that the old paradigm of reading Revelation simply as comfort for the marginalized and persecuted will no longer hold.⁵ At best, this corresponds only to the situation in Smyrna, and even there no deaths are mentioned. Pergamum has witnessed only one martyrdom at the time of John's writing.

Revelation, therefore, is not merely written to Christians in daily danger of being hauled before magistrates and sent to the arenas.⁶ On the one hand, some believers—those which are mainly in agreement with John and fully committed to their confession—are comforted and encouraged in the face of growing troubles. John, however, seeks to persuade others that they are in grave danger precisely because they are in no danger of suffering for their faith. The first three chapters of Revelation may be read, to a surprising extent, as an attempt to create a sense of crisis among those who currently "go placidly" amidst the streets of their cities (although this sense of crisis also serves

still affirm that John is acting in good faith, bringing his churches to see their situation in light of the God of the Scriptures and the God of Jesus. A faithful leader of churches, John indeed "sees" the world and interprets the world through the lens of the Scriptures and chooses the most engaging medium possible to help his charges see their situation correctly and make faithful choices. This model for understanding the apocalypse also suggests new possibilities for the interpretation and application of Revelation, finding fruits in such well-known prophetic messages as Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" sermon—a word which brings the hearers face to face with the vision of God for God's people. Whether Dr. King actually received that vision in a dream or not does not affect its power to move Christians to make faithful choices and censure faithless courses of action.

4. See W. M. Ramsey, *The Letters to the Seven Churches in Asia* (rev. ed.; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994); C. J. Hemer, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in Their Local Setting* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986); H. Koester, ed., *Ephesos: Metropolis of Asia* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity, 1995).

5. This could provide an entree into the ideology in the history of interpretation—namely, how interpreters have led their own readers to "see" the seven churches.

6. See especially Thompson, *The Book of Revelation*, 96-132, 171-85; Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis*, 84-110; D. L. Barr, "The Apocalypse as Symbolic Transformation of the World," *Int* 38 (1984) 39-50; C. H. Talbert, *The Apocalypse: A Reading of the Revelation of John* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1994) 24-25; W. J. Harrington, O. P. (*Revelation* [Collegeville, Minn.: Glazier, 1993] 153) weaves in this awareness skillfully in his exposition of the pastoral effect of Rev 14:9-11.

John's objectives for churches which substantially agree with him, as in the oracle to Smyrna, 2:10).

The members of the dominant culture and Jewish ethnic sub-culture appear to have challenged the honor of a number of Christians. The oracles to Smyrna and Philadelphia (2:8-11; 3:7-13) speak of the "slander" of Jews living in those cities directed toward the Christian community and promise vindication of the believers' honor in the sight of their detractors. Believers in Smyrna are exposed to "affliction" and stand in danger of imprisonment, both of which may be understood as replications of the society's rejection of them as deviants and attempts to shame them into a more "honorable" way of life. A number of believers are commended for not denying Jesus' name, a course which apparently led to the untimely death of one Christian in Pergamum (perhaps by official action, but equally possibly the result of a lynching). There are clearly attempts being made to pressure believers in these communities into hiding or denying their association with the unpopular and subversive name *Christian*.

Believers in Sardis and Laodicea are, notably, challenged not by their society but, in John's prophetic voice, by Jesus himself. Here are congregations which receive not encouragement from John but a challenge to their claims to honor. Sardis has a reputation (a "name") for being alive, but is really dead (3:1); Laodicea's claims to wealth and prosperity are rejected as self-deception (3:17). These congregations, together with some percentage of the believers in Pergamum and Thyatira, suffer from being too well adjusted to the ethos and demands of the dominant culture. The external pressures and the internal propensities to conform constitute, from John's perspective, a grave danger to the believing communities.

One important objective of John's is to undermine the authority of rival Christian prophets like "Jezebel" and the "Nicolaitans" (2:15-25). These seem to represent more "moderate" voices within the church, urging believers to participate in certain forms of Greco-Roman cult if by so doing they may preserve their temporal safety and advantages. John's interest in the cult of the beast and its image throughout Revelation 13-20 suggests that this cult was particularly important in the landscape of the seven churches and would be a primary point at which accommodation would be urged for the sake of peaceful coexistence with the dominant culture. John's portrait of this cult was so successful that for decades scholars, influenced by this text, reinscribed John's ideologically-colored description of its workings—as being imposed from above at the instigation of Rome and her emperors and routinely employed as a test of loyalty. The imperial cult is now more correctly understood as, for those who participated in it, an expression of gratitude and loyalty toward the fount of patronage

for the Mediterranean world.⁷ By withdrawing from cultic expressions of solidarity with the citizenry and of loyalty and gratitude toward those who secured the well-being of the city, Gentile Christians especially were held in suspicion and stood at risk of being viewed as subversive, unreliable, and even dangerous elements of society.⁸ The "Nicolaitans," who appear to have been gaining some ground in Asia Minor, speak to this very issue. These teachers, together with "Jezebel," are all depicted in similar terms—they "eat food sacrificed to idols and commit fornication" (Rev 2:14; 2:20) and teach others to do so as well. They present an alternative interpretation of the gospel and therefore an alternative response to the social order, vying with John's interpretation for acceptance as the "faithful" response. For John, they represented a present and persuasive threat to the boundaries and definitions of the communities.

John labels (and censures) his opponents using figures from the Jewish Scriptures, casting them as enemies of the people of God. It is a challenge to get behind John's labeling and strategically negative coloring of their stance—an indication of the intensity of the power struggle between John and these rivals. The Nicolaitans are cast as disciples of Balaam (Balaam means in Hebrew what Nicolaus means in Greek, namely, "conquering" or "wearing down the people"⁹). Balaam is remembered in Jewish tradition for leading Israel astray at Baal-Peor, a story recounted in Num 25:1-3. Balaam's responsibility in this incident is recorded in Num 31:16. At Baal-Peor, the Israelites "began to play the harlot with the daughters of Moab," with the consequence that they accepted the Moabites' invitation to bow down to their gods and eat of their sacrifices. Balaam became thus a figure for

7. Cf. S. R. F. Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); G. W. Bowersock, "The Imperial Cult: Perceptions and Persistence," in *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition* (ed. B. F. Meyer and E. P. Sanders; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982) 3.170-82; D. Earl, *The Age of Augustus* (New York: Exeter, 1968) 166-76; Thompson, *The Book of Revelation*, 95-170. These developments are summarized and John's counterpropaganda explored in D. A. deSilva, "The 'Image of the Beast' and the Christians in Asia Minor: Escalation of Sectarian Tension in Revelation 13," *Trinity Journal* 12 n.s. (1991) 185-208.

8. The author of 1 Peter, for example, speaks of the origin of the society's hostility in the unbelievers' surprise that their former colleagues no longer join them in their accustomed rituals and practices (4:3-5). While 1 Peter censures these activities as "excesses of dissipation," these activities included the "lawless idolatry" (4:3) which was the foundation of civic loyalty and solidarity. A view from the "other side" comes from Pliny the Younger (*Ep.* 10.96), who sees the renewed interest in traditional religious activity as the healthy result of his investigation of the deviant Christians, many of whom are now returning to fulfill their social and civic obligations.

9. This bilingual pun is noted by R. H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1920) 1.52; J. M. Ford, *Revelation* (New York: Doubleday, 1975) 391.

the false teacher of apostasy and is particularly connected with teaching the Midianites to convince the Israelites to "eat food sacrificed to idols and practice immorality." The danger associated with this is loss of Israel's identity as the "people of God," becoming indistinguishable from the nations around them.

When John casts the Nicolaitans as "disciples of Balaam" and highlights "eating food sacrificed to idols," the main issue appears to be whether or not one can, as a Christian, participate in the religious life of the Greco-Roman society.¹⁰ There are obvious advantages for doing so—it eliminates all the tension between the church and society if one can again go out in public and show oneself a "pious" and "reliable" resident of the city through participation in the cults of the traditional gods and emperors. If it could be shown that "an idol is nothing" and that these empty rituals could not offend God, why should the Christians suffer society's hostility unnecessarily? In this context, it is better to read the second charge—committing fornication—metaphorically, especially in light of the use of this same image by John to describe attachments to Rome (14:8; chaps. 17-18).¹¹ John wants his audiences to see the Nicolaitans' position as a violation of one's faithful relationship to Jesus.

John further labels a female opponent "Jezebel," an unflattering epithet associating this prophetess with the wife of Ahab and queen of Israel who supported the prophets of Baal in Israel. John's overall success in this campaign may be seen from the fact that we have no knowledge of this prophetess's true name or the names of any other of John's rivals. They have continued to be remembered, in the first instance, by these epithets. "Jezebel's" endorsement of a stance which allowed some degree of participation in the cultic rites which accompany meetings of guilds and even dinners among networks of "friends" would be quite natural if she was herself a person of means, intent on maintaining her status. At the very least, she is presented

10. Mounce, *Revelation*, 81; A. LeGrys, "Conflict and Vengeance in the Book of Revelation," *ExpTim* 104 (1992) 76-80; Talbert, *The Apocalypse*, 19; Ford, *Revelation*, 291; G. B. Caird, *The Revelation of St. John* (London: Black, 1966) 39: "The sum total of the Nicolaitan's offense, then, is that they took a laxer attitude than John to pagan society and religion."

11. Mounce (*Revelation*, 81) and J. Roloff (*The Revelation of John* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993] 52) hold that the Nicolaitans deviated from the group's sexual norms. This indicates the danger of "mirror reading" the details of an ideologically charged (not to mention highly allusive) text. When John describes his rivals, he describes them as he wants them to be seen, not necessarily as a detached observer would see them. Caird (*The Revelation of Saint John*, 39) notes that, "in every other case except one in which he uses the verb *porneuein* or the noun *porneia* he uses them metaphorically." It is probably on the right track, then, to give the verb such a sense here.

as a vocal advocate for accommodation to social pressures for the sake of the survival of the community.¹²

John is thus already engaged in a number of power struggles. The ideological texture of Revelation is therefore sure to be rich, because John portrays his rivals and the course of action they promote in the most negative and disadvantageous light possible. John's objectives are not limited, however, by his concerns over these rivals. Another sort of internal compromise is to be found in the issue of wealth in Laodicea. Achieving and maintaining wealth in the Roman province was closely tied to partnership with Rome, presented in Revelation 18 as the image of wealth and conspicuous consumption. The road to riches was the way of accommodation and compromise. When the boundaries of the community could be abrogated, the members of the community could freely participate in the pagan economy, in league with Rome, and share in her prosperity. Perhaps even more insidiously, they might believe in the myth of her prosperity, encapsulated in the ideology of *Roma Aeterna*. In his oration "On the Fortune of Rome," for example, Plutarch writes about Rome's significance thus: "Time, who, with God's help, laid her foundations, yoked Fortune and Virtue together, so as to use the special powers of both in creating for all mankind a hearth truly 'holy and wealth-giving', a secure 'mooring-cable, an abiding element, an 'anchor in the surge and drift' of this shifting world" (*Mor.* 317A).¹³ All the essential elements of the ideology are here: Rome's founding by the will of Jupiter,¹⁴ the role of Rome as bringer of stability, rule of law, and peace,¹⁵ and the fruits of divine favor manifested in temporal prosperity.

John will thus be engaged throughout in another level of ideological warfare—he will rewrite the Roman imperial ideology from a distinctively countercultural perspective. Both pillars of this ide-

12. On the social and economic dangers facing the Christian who avoided all contact with idolatrous settings, see Ford, *Revelation*, 406; Charles, *Revelation*, 1.69-70; Mounce, *Revelation*, 85-86. Aune ("Social Matrix," 28) presents the intriguing opinion that Jezebel is in fact the "chair" of the Nicolaitan circle of prophets, which has gained substantial ground in Pergamum and Thyatira but has been successfully blocked in Ephesus. According to this view, she is John's primary rival among the seven churches.

13. Plutarch, *Selected Essays and Dialogues* (trans. Donald Russell; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

14. Cf. Virgil *Aeneid* 1.234-37, where Venus says to Jupiter of the survivors of Troy:
Surely from these the Romans are to come
In the course of years, renewing Teucer's line,
To rule the sea and all the lands about it,
According to your promise.

15. Cf. Virgil *Aeneid* 4.231-32, where Jupiter summarizes Aeneas's mission:
To father men from Teucer's noble blood
And bring the whole world under law's dominion.

ology—Rome and the emperor (and the cult by which honor and gratitude toward him were demonstrated in Asia Minor)—will be re-presented, not as patron goddess and supreme mediator of divine gifts, but as a "whore" drunk with the blood of God's servants and a "beast" who is the pawn of Satan, God's archenemy. These are central topics of Revelation 12-13 and 17-18, and the full exploration of John's alternative ideology of these figures would belong to commentary on those chapters. Nevertheless, important elements of that counterideology emerge in 14:6-13.

As we look through the multiple textures of Rev 14:6-13, therefore, we should keep in the forefront of our minds the choices which lay before the various audiences addressed in the seven churches, the different available ideologies, and John's particular objectives for the seven churches. How does this passage contribute to John's goal of moving the audiences to "see" the world as John sees it and to respond to that world as John would have them respond? What techniques does he use to move the audience to construe "advantage" in such a way that they will act to maintain the distinctive culture of the group,¹⁶ even if that brings them into serious "disadvantage" in their relationship with the dominant culture?

INNER TEXTURE

Repetitive Texture within the Passage

The language of Revelation is highly repetitive, such that John appears deliberately to be setting up aural echoes and cross-references throughout his work, the cumulative effect of which is to strengthen his bipolar thinking and to reinforce his strategic presentation of the options facing his audiences. Investigation of these repetitive patterns (both within and beyond the passage) shows that John is guiding the audiences to "see" and "partition" the world around them and thus to accept John's interpretation of their world, even at this most basic level.

The first instance of repetition within the passage sets two actions in strict opposition to one another:

προσκυνησατε τῷ ποιήσαντι τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν (14:7)
 εἴ τις προσκυνεῖ τὸ θηρίον καὶ τὴν εἰκόνα αὐτοῦ (14:9)
 οἱ προσκυνοῦντες τὸ θηρίον καὶ τὴν εἰκόνα αὐτοῦ (14:11)

16. For fuller discussion of how Revelation as "apocalypse" works to interpret everyday realities and choices in terms of a larger world-construction, thus advancing John's objectives for the audiences in the seven churches, see D. A. deSilva, "The Construction and Social Function of a Counter-Cosmos in the Revelation of John" (*Forum* 9 [1993] 47-61); and Barr, "Symbolic Transformation."

All people are called to worship the God who "made heaven and earth" and are threatened with eternal torture and shame if they worship "the beast and its image." Rev 14:6-13 makes explicit the incompatibility of the two forms of worship which have dominated major portions of Revelation: namely, the opening sequence of celestial worship of God and the Lamb in Revelation 4-5 and the vision of the dragon's last assault on God's faithful clients in Revelation 12-13 through the promotion of the beast and its worship. Displaying these acts as opposing and incompatible advances John's agenda over against the program of Jezebel and the Nicolaitans. These teachers, like the voices which Paul counters in 1 Corinthians 8, suggest that participation in local cultic acts such as the emperor cult cannot harm one's relationship with the One true God. Beginning at the level of repetitive patterns in the text, John is rending asunder what Jezebel would join together.

Other repetitive patterns within the passage focus on the fate of those who fail to choose the first form of worship (God) to the complete exclusion of the second cultic act (worshiping "the beast"). One pattern contrasts the fate of the worshiper of the beast with the faithful worshiper of the One God:

οὐκ ἔχουσιν ἀνάπαυσιν ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτός (14:11)
 ἵνα ἀναπαήσονται ἐκ τῶν κόπων αὐτῶν (14:13)

The first statement portrays a grim picture of public torment without rest or reprieve for those who worship the beast or receive its mark; the second speaks of the "favored status" or "blessedness" (Μακάριοι οἱ νεκροὶ) of those who "die in the Lord" as consisting in their entry into rest from their labors. Those who die rather than submit to participation in the emperor cult are pronounced the "favored" ones, since they enjoy what is eternally denied those who worship the beast.

Two other repetitive patterns serve to accentuate the danger which attends the course of action which John recommends against:

- (a) ἐκ τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς πεπότικεν πάντα τὰ ἔθνη (14:8)
 ἐκ τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ κεκερασμένου ἀκράτου ἐν τῷ πορηρίῳ τῆς ὀργῆς αὐτοῦ [πίεται] (14:10)
- (b) Εἴ τις προσκυνεῖ τὸ θηρίον καὶ τὴν εἰκόνα αὐτοῦ καὶ λαμβάνει χάραγμα ἐπὶ τοῦ μετώπου αὐτοῦ ἢ ἐπὶ τὴν χεῖρα αὐτοῦ (14:9)
 οἱ προσκυνούντες τὸ θηρίον καὶ τὴν εἰκόνα αὐτοῦ καὶ εἴ τις λαμβάνει τὸ χάραγμα τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ (14:11)

The first pair (a) links the cup that Babylon gives to delude the nations with the cup that God gives to punish the worshiper of the beast and its image. The effect of this repetition seems to be to suggest that

if one "drinks in" the ideology of Rome as benefactress of the world and engages in the cultic expressions of gratitude to that benefactress and her representatives, the emperors, one will also "drink in" the wrath of God as a sort of chaser.

The second pair (b) reinforces the nature of the "crime" which God's judgment will especially target. The phrase acts as a sort of inclusion for the third angel's message, the middle of which is filled with images of endless punishment and degradation. This section may be worth considering as a possible chiasm:

A	Εἴ τις προσκυνεῖ τὸ θηρίον καὶ τὴν εἰκόνα αὐτοῦ
A1	καὶ λαμβάνει χάραγμα ἐπὶ τοῦ μετώπου αὐτοῦ ἢ ἐπὶ τὴν χεῖρα αὐτοῦ,
B	καὶ αὐτὸς πίεται ἐκ τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ κεκερασμένου ἀκράτου ἐν τῷ ποτηρίῳ τῆς ὀργῆς αὐτοῦ
C	καὶ βασανισθήσεται ἐν πυρὶ καὶ θείῳ ἐνώπιον ἀγγέλων ἁγίων καὶ ἐνώπιον τοῦ ἀρνίου.
C'	καὶ ὁ καπνὸς τοῦ βασανισμοῦ αὐτῶν εἰς αἰῶνας αἰώνων ἀναβαίνει
B'	καὶ οὐκ ἔχουσιν ἀνάπαυσιν ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτός
A'	οἱ προσκυνοῦντες τὸ θηρίον καὶ τὴν εἰκόνα αὐτοῦ καὶ
A1'	εἴ τις λαμβάνει τὸ χάραγμα τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ

The repetition of words with the same root (βασανισ-) suggests that there may be a C and C' in this passage, beyond merely the ABB'A' pattern. Whether chiasm or simply inclusion, the effect of the repetitive pattern is essentially the same: the repetition of the course of action before and after the punishment reinforces the identification of this course as undesirable—specifically "disadvantageous" (see "Argumentative Texture" below).

Repetitive Patterns beyond the Passage

The repetitive character of the language of Revelation not only creates resonances and connections within 14:6-13 but establishes these throughout the whole work. These aural/oral echoes remind the audience of other parts of the vision, creating an environment for mutual reinforcement and interpretation.

The first angel proclaims a message "over every nation and tribe and tongue and people" (ἐπὶ πᾶν ἔθνος καὶ φυλὴν καὶ γλῶσσαν καὶ λαόν, 14:6). This phrase, always with some minor variation, occurs six other times in the space of thirteen chapters (5:9; 7:9; 10:11; 11:9; 13:7; 17:15). What the hearer of Revelation discovers through this web of echoes is an environment of competition. The beast exercises authority "over every tribe and people and language and nation" (ἐδόθη αὐτῷ ἐξουσία ἐπὶ πᾶσαν φυλὴν καὶ λαόν καὶ γλῶσσαν καὶ ἔθνος, 13:7), and the

whose is enthroned upon "peoples and crowds and nations and languages" (λαοὶ καὶ ὄχλοι εἰσὶν καὶ ἔθνη καὶ γλῶσσαι, 17:15). Nevertheless, they are not allowed to claim all of humanity. The Lamb has "ransomed for God" people "from every tribe and language and people and nation" (ἐκ πάσης φυλῆς καὶ γλώσσης καὶ λαοῦ καὶ ἔθνους, 5:9). Because of the Lamb, an innumerable crowd is gathered "out from every nation and from tribes and peoples and languages" (ἐκ παντὸς ἔθνους καὶ φυλῶν καὶ λαῶν καὶ γλωσσῶν, 7:9) with palms of victory and white garments to praise God for deliverance. John's prophetic ministry to "many peoples and nations and languages and kings" (ἐπὶ λαοῖς καὶ ἔθνεσιν καὶ γλώσσαις καὶ βασιλεῦσιν πολλοῖς, 10:11), like the call of the first angel in 14:6, participates in the creation of this redeemed "kingdom of priests," even though the witness to the Lamb's activity may end up as a corpse, to be viewed by "peoples and tribes and languages and nations" (ἐκ τῶν λαῶν καὶ φυλῶν καὶ γλωσσῶν καὶ ἔθνων τὸ πτώμα αὐτῶν, 11:9). Repetitive texture here reinforces John's social program for the churches: namely, their staunch refusal to assimilate into the dominant culture but rather to preserve their distinctive cultural identity. It also exhibits the ideological texture of the text, by insisting that the Lamb and the beast are in competition for people from every group (that is, there can be no cooperation between followers of the Lamb and supporters of the beast). Through skillful use of repetition, John is creating divisions and positing incompatible alternatives where other voices in the seven churches do not see such stark separations. It is also noteworthy that John presents himself as aligned with the proclamation of an angel and with the mission of the Lamb. He serves the Lamb's agenda, whereas other voices, he will claim, serve the agenda of the beast and Babylon.

The first angel's message calls the inhabitants of the earth to "fear God and give him glory" (Φοβήθητε τὸν θεὸν καὶ δότε αὐτῷ δόξαν, 14:7). The worship of the one God—the strict maintenance of this Jewish-Christian definition of piety as monolatry—is of central concern to John. The angelic beings which surround God's throne "give glory . . . to the One seated on the throne" (δώσουσιν . . . δόξαν . . . τῷ καθημένῳ ἐπὶ τῷ θρόνῳ, 4:9), as do the host of invitees to the marriage feast of the Lamb (δώσωμεν τὴν δόξαν αὐτῷ, 19:5, 7), who are notably described as "those who fear God" (οἱ φοβούμενοι αὐτόν, 19:7; cf. 11:18). The combination of fearing God and giving God glory appears twice more in Revelation. Those who witness the martyrdom and resurrection of the two witnesses "feared greatly and gave glory to the God of heaven" (ἐμφοβοὶ ἐγένοντο καὶ ἔδωκαν δόξαν τῷ θεῷ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, 11:13). Finally, those who "overcome the beast and its image" sing a song which resonates with the first angel's message at three key points (fearing God, glorifying God, and worshiping God):

Who could possibly not fear, Lord, and glorify your name? . . . All nations will come and worship before you, because your just decrees have been revealed (τίς οὐ μὴ φοβηθῆ, κύριε, καὶ δοξάσει τὸ ὄνομά σου; ὅτι μόνος ὁσίος, ὅτι πάντα τὰ ἔθνη ἤξουσιν καὶ προσκυνήσουσιν ἐνώπιόν σου, ὅτι τὰ δικαιώματά σου ἐγανερώθησαν, 15:4)

The song of the conquerors, however, is answered contrary to all expectation in 16:9, where the worshipers of the beast face the judgments of God but "did not repent, so as to give glory to him [God]" (οὐ μετενόησαν δοῦναι αὐτῷ δόξαν, 16:9). John displays the activity of superhuman beings as "giving God glory" and sets up the expectation that all people will "fear and glorify God." Those who fail to do so, namely, those outside the Christian community (and, more specifically, those who are not Christian as John defines "Christian"), are set up by these repetitions to be viewed as all the more deviant and base for their failure.

John spins his most complicated pattern of repetitions around the word "worship." This is a very powerful word for John. As we shall see, it is richly overlaid with intertextual references to the Jewish Scriptures, standing within the primary commandment in the legal corpus of scripture. It carries connotations of "piety" and "justice" if worship is done properly and "impiety" or "injustice" if proper worship is neglected. It thus provides power for positive and negative sanctions. Within 14:6-13, John has set "worship" of the Creator and Judge against "worship" of the beast and its image. This differentiation is at the center of John's strategy, and repetitive texture throughout the book undergirds John's presentation of these alternative and incompatible, rather than complementary, courses of action. The first angel commands the inhabitants of the world to "worship the one who made heaven and earth and seas" (προσκυνήσατε τῷ ποιήσαντι τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν, 14:7). All human beings are thus called to participate in the cult which already endlessly occupies the several orders of angelic beings around God's throne (4:10; 5:14; 7:11; 11:16; 19:4). John twice attempts to worship one of these angelic beings and is twice reminded himself that one must worship only God (τῷ θεῷ προσκύνησον, 19:10; cf. 22:8-9).

Not everyone falls down in worship around this divine center. John has drawn the hearer's attention already to those who "worshiped the dragon, who gave authority to the beast, and worshiped the beast" (προσεκύνησαν τῷ δράκοντι, ὅτι ἔδωκεν τὴν ἐξουσίαν τῷ θηρίῳ, καὶ προσεκύνησαν τῷ θηρίῳ, 13:4). Who will participate in this "worship"? "All the inhabitants of the earth whose names have not been written in the Book of Life" worship the beast (προσκυνήσουσιν αὐτὸν πάντες οἱ κατοικοῦνες ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, οὓς οὐ γέγραπται τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ βιβλίῳ τῆς ζωῆς, 13:8). A second beast enforces this worship, causing

all who refuse to worship the beast or its image to be killed (13:12, 15). Nevertheless, a more terrible punishment awaits those who do worship the beast and receive its mark upon their foreheads or hands (λαμβάνει χάραγμα ἐπὶ τοῦ μετώπου αὐτοῦ ἢ ἐπὶ τὴν χεῖρα αὐτοῦ, 14:9; cf. 14:11; 13:16-17; 16:2; 19:20 for repetitions of this "mark" filling out its resonances).

The remaining repetitions of the verb προσυνεῖν take the hearer to the responses and respective fates of two different groups of people. Some refuse to "repent so as not to worship demons and idols" (οὐδε μετενόησαν . . . "ἵνα μὴ προσκυνήσουσιν τὰ δαιμόνια καὶ τὰ εἰδωλα, 9:20). These, however, suffer the judgment of God on account of "having the mark of the beast and worshiping its image" (τοὺς ἔχοντας τὸ χάραγμα τοῦ θηρίου καὶ τοὺς προσκυνοῦντας τῇ εἰκόνι αὐτοῦ, 16:2). Eventually, those beasts who deceived them into false worship will be punished (ἐπιᾶσθη τὸ θηρίον καὶ μετ' αὐτοῦ ὁ ψευδοπροφήτης ὁ ποιήσας τὰ σημεῖα ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ, ἐν οἷς ἐπλάνησεν τοὺς λαβόντας τὸ χάραγμα τοῦ θηρίου καὶ τοὺς προσκυνοῦντας τῇ εἰκόνι αὐτοῦ, 19:20), a fate which also awaits the idolater, as our passage describes. It is possible, indeed desirable and imperative as far as John is concerned, to "overcome the beast and its image" (τοὺς νικῶντας ἐκ τοῦ θηρίου καὶ ἐκ τῆς εἰκόνος αὐτοῦ, 15:2) rather than worship them. These "conquerors" die rather than worship the beast, but it is precisely these who reign with Christ for the millennium (οἵτινες οὐ προσεκύνησαν τὸ θηρίον οὐδε τὴν εἰκόνα αὐτοῦ καὶ οὐκ ἔλαβον τὸ χάραγμα ἐπὶ τὸ μέτωπον καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν χεῖρα αὐτῶν, 20:4). Repetitive texture already moves the hearer in the direction of seeking to emulate the latter group, rather than succumb to the deception which leads to everlasting punishment and disgrace.

The second angel's message introduces the figure of "Babylon the Great," who will become a central character in Revelation 17-18 (Βαβυλῶν ἡ μεγάλη, 14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2, 10, 21). Babylon is introduced here as one who "made all the nations drink from the wine of the violent passion of her fornication" (ἐκ τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς πεπότικεν πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, 14:8). All the elements of this description reappear throughout the visions which follow. Babylon is accused again in 17:2 and 18:3 of making the earth drunken with the "wine of her fornication" (μεθ' ἧς ἐπόρνευσαν οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς καὶ ἐμεθύσθησαν οἱ κατοικοῦντες τὴν γῆν ἐκ τοῦ οἴνου τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς, 17:2; ἐκ τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς πέπωκαν πάντα τὰ ἔθνη καὶ οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς μετ' αὐτῆς ἐπόρνευσαν, 18:3). John refers once more to the "uncleannesses of her fornication" (τὰ ἀκάθαρτα τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς, 17:4) in her cup. Finally, the angels and holy ones celebrate the fact that God "has judged the great whore who despoiled the earth with her fornication" (ἐκρινεν τὴν πόρνην τὴν μεγάλην ἣτις ἔφθειρεν τὴν γῆν ἐν τῇ πορνείᾳ αὐτῆς, 19:2).

The second angel's announcement of Babylon's doom is echoed verbatim by another angel at 18:2 ("Ἐπεσεν ἔπεσεν Βαβυλῶν ἡ μεγάλη). This repetition reinforces the labeling which John uses as part of his campaign against Roma, the hypostasization of Roman power which was worshiped throughout Asia Minor. The images of drunkenness and sexual looseness paint a depraved and unattractive portrait of this figure. Repetitive texture here takes the hearer to the heart of John's ideological campaign against dominant cultural discourse about Rome. Intriguingly, one other figure will be characterized by fornication, and that is John's rival Jezebel, who "refused to repent of her fornication" (οὐ θέλει μετανοῆσαι ἐκ τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς, 2:21). Revelation undermines Jezebel's position by this close association of her prophetic ministry with the depravity of Babylon. Just as Babylon commits fornication with the kings of the earth, so Jezebel commits adultery with those who accept her teaching (2:22). Repetitive texture thus supports another aspect of John's ideological warfare.

Several patterns of repetitive texture also emerge connecting 14:9-11 with other texts in Revelation. These repetitions are less numerous, making the echoes perhaps all the more pointed and specific. The effect of these repetitions is to underscore the grim claim that the worshiper of the beast will share in the punishment God metes out to the beast and Babylon. Those who join themselves to what John views as an impious cult will reap the rewards of impiety. The "wine of the violent passion of God" appears twice in Revelation: the worshiper of the beast must drink from this cup in 14:10 (αὐτὸς πίεται ἐκ τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ κεκερασμένου ἀκράτου ἐν τῷ ποτηρίῳ τῆς ὀργῆς αὐτοῦ); Babylon herself will be given this cup in 16:19 (Βαβυλῶν ἡ μεγάλη ἐμνήσθη ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ δοῦναι αὐτῇ τὸ ποτήριον τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τῆς ὀργῆς αὐτοῦ). The smoke of the torment of the idolater "goes up into the ages of ages" (καὶ ὁ καπνὸς τοῦ βασανισμοῦ αὐτῶν εἰς αἰῶνας αἰῶνων ἀναβαίνει, 14:11) just as the smoke of Babylon's burning will (καὶ ὁ καπνὸς αὐτῆς ἀναβαίνει εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰῶνων, 19:3). There is the suggestion that this is the answer to the prayers of the saints, which also "went up as smoke" (i.e., incense) before God (8:4). Those who share in the wine of Babylon, who drink in her teaching about herself and seek to prosper by means of her rule, will also thus share in her punishment. The repetitive texture underscores the direct exhortation of 18:4 ("Come out of her, my people, so that you do not share in her sins and receive her plagues") and thus John's social agenda for the churches generally.

The same can be said of the beast: those who wish to be seen as grateful clients of the beast will be seen by God as enemies to be punished along with Satan, the beast, and the false prophet. The worshiper of the beast "will be tortured with fire and sulfur" (καὶ

βασανισθήσεται ἐν πυρὶ καὶ θείῳ, 14:10), together with the beasts, who are cast into the "lake of fire burning with sulfur" (τοῦ πυρὸς τῆς καιομένης ἐν θείῳ, 19:20), and finally the devil, who joins them in "the lake of fire and sulfur" (τὴν λίμνην τοῦ πυρὸς καὶ θείου) to "be tortured day and night into the ages of ages" (βασανισθήσονται ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων, 20:10). As John begins to describe the New Jerusalem, he lists those who are excluded: "as for the cowardly, the unfaithful, and . . . idolaters, . . . their lot is in the lake burning with fire and sulfur, which is the second death" (τὸ μέρος αὐτῶν ἐν τῇ λίμνῃ τῇ καιομένῃ πυρὶ καὶ θείῳ, ὃ ἔστιν ὁ θάνατος ὁ δεύτερος, 21:8). Other repetitions within these verses reinforce this message. The worshipers of the beast, says the third angel, will "not have rest day or night" (οὐκ ἔχουσιν ἀνάπαυσιν ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτὸς, 14:11; cf. 20:10, where the beasts are tormented "day and night," βασανισθήσονται ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτὸς, 20:10). A striking precursor to 14:11 appears in the very different context of the angelic liturgy surrounding God's throne, where the four cherubim "do not rest day and night, saying, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty'" (ἀνάπαυσιν οὐκ ἔχουσιν ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτὸς, 4:8).¹⁷ This brings the hearer back to John's creation of two stark alternatives: worship God without lapse or be punished without lapse.

The final two verses of this passage also participate in the repetitive texture of the whole. John points to the decree that the worshiper of the beast and its image will come to eternal punishment as the source for "the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and faith with Jesus" (Ἐνδε ἡ ὑπομονὴ τῶν ἁγίων ἔστιν, οἱ τηροῦντες τὰς ἐνταλάς τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὴν πίστιν Ἰησοῦ, 14:12).¹⁸ John uses the phrase "here is the endurance of the saints" in one other place. After presenting the beast's war against the saints and adoration by the world in 13:7-8, John locates the "endurance and the faith/firmness of the saints" (Ἐνδε ἔστιν ἡ ὑπομονὴ καὶ πίστις τῶν ἁγίων, 13:10) in the assurance that anyone who is "for captivity" will "go into captivity" and that anyone who is "to be killed by a sword will himself or herself be killed by a sword." The interpretation of 13:9 has its own difficulties, but the repetition at least reinforces the sense of divine determination which runs throughout the book, locating the source of the inner resources he wants his churches to have in this conviction about God's providence and final justice.

The second half of 14:12 defines the "saints" as of οἱ τηροῦντες τὰς ἐνταλάς τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὴν πίστιν Ἰησοῦ). This description of a group of people also appears in 12:17, there as the specific target of the de-

17. The parody has been noted by Harrington (*Revelation*, 150) and Caird (*Revelation*, 187), among others.

18. The translation "keep faith with Jesus" takes the genitive Ἰησοῦ as an "objective" genitive (cf. Mounce, *Revelation*, 275).

feated dragon's final assault on the favored woman. There it is used to define who the "rest of her seed" are (τῶν τηρούντων τὰς ἐνταλάς τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἔχόντων τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ). "Witness" is replaced by "loyalty/faith" in the second articulation of this phrase. The single word "keeping" itself participates in a series of resonances throughout the book, appearing in two makarisms (1:3; 22:7), four instructions from Jesus (2:26; 3:3, 8, 10), and another statement by an angel (22:9). The "favored" and "blessed" are those who "keep" the words of John's prophecy (1:3; 22:7, 9), which is also to "keep" the words and works of Jesus (2:26; 3:3, 8, 10), which are identified in large measure with John's prophecy. Rev 14:13, one of seven "makarisms" running throughout Revelation (1:3; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14), has special resonances with the makarism in 20:6. In both, people who die (οἱ νεκροὶ οἱ ἐν κυρίῳ ἀποθνήσκοντες, 14:13; τὰς ψυχὰς τῶν πεπελεκισμένων διὰ τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ καὶ διὰ τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ οἵτινες οὐ προσεκύνησαν τὸ θηρίον οὐδὲ τὴν εἰκόνα αὐτοῦ, 20:4) are pronounced "honorable" or "favored" (Μακάριοι, 14:13; μακάριος, 20:6). These become the positive models for John's audience—those whom they will emulate if they submit to John's vision and the ideology it inscribes.

Argumentative Texture

Crucial for the success of John's rhetorical strategy is the willingness of his hearers to submit to his interpretation of what the world is "really" like. John's *ethos* in the "speech" of Revelation is created by his appearance in the role of prophet, a person through whom God reveals God's mind and provides a reliable perspective on reality (both the visible reality of everyday experience and the invisible reality which becomes the context for interpreting visible phenomena). Thus John's reminders of his role—the vehicle for, rather than originator of, the message—are an important part of the argumentative texture. Here, this is effected through the Καὶ εἶδον of 14:6 and the ἤκουσα φωνῆς ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ λεγούσης, Ἐγράψον of 14:13. The content of the text the hearers hear and the words on the page which the lector reads originate in beings whose reliability is beyond question (God's messengers, the Spirit, elsewhere Christ and even God's own voice). Nevertheless, John also demonstrates his reliability in 14:6-13 by presenting himself as one who is intimately interested in seeing justice and piety preserved. Aristotle said that *ethos* could be established incidentally by calling for the maintenance of virtue and avoidance of vice (*Rh.* 1.9.1). John's association of his own voice with the voices of the angels calling for proper piety to be preserved and impiety to be avoided reinforces his character as the "reliable" prophet.

These visions create a world in which certain actions or alliances are advantageous and others disadvantageous; certain models are

praiseworthy, others are censurable. As we follow these basic topics of deliberative and epideictic rhetoric, the argumentative texture of 14:6-13 opens itself up to the interpreter. The first angel proposes a course of action: "Fear God and give God glory" (14:7). Both "fearing" and "giving glory" have to do with honoring God as God merits. The angel provides two rationales supporting this course of action as "advantageous," the first reason being that "the hour of his judgment came." This suggests an appeal to the topic of "safety" or "security," a subtopic of "advantage" in the scheme of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*. If judgment is to come from God, then it is advantageous to be found among God's faithful clients (God's allies, as it were), rather than among God's enemies, upon whom he will enact judgment.

The second reason is implied in the description of God as "the one who made heaven and earth and sea and streams of water." As creator of all things, God is "worthy" of honor from his creatures. This course of action, therefore, is grounded in the mutual obligations of patrons and clients. Those who were given "favor" were obliged to show "gratitude" to the giver, the first element of which was the duty to show respect and increase the honor of the giver. When the gift was life itself, the obligation was immeasurable (cf. Aristotle *Eth. Nic.* 8.14.4: "no one could ever render the gods the honor they deserve, and a person is deemed virtuous if he or she pays them all the honor he or she can"). If that display of gratitude (honor, loyalty, and service) means loss of life, that did not excuse the individual from rendering to God his due (cf. 4 Macc 13:13; 16:18-19). Exclusive worship of the One God is thus urged as a proper enactment of "the just," which is a subtopic of "the right," a component of "advantage" (*Rhet. ad Her.* 3.3 4).

The second angel's message does not explicitly call for a course of action. Rather, it moves in more epideictic modes as it presents the figure of Babylon as a censurable one—one debauched and vice-ridden, who has acted even more shamefully by spreading her vices among the nations. This picture portrays Babylon as a "fallen" power as well, affirming that vice comes to a bad end. As praise of certain figures arouses emulation, censure would arouse nonemulation, possibly even indignation. Moreover, while not explicitly calling for a response on the part of the hearers (unlike 18:5), this brief epideictic moment would have the effect of dissuading people from association with Babylon. Association with this figure would be "disadvantageous" on two counts: it would bring dishonor, since Babylon is a dishonorable and polluting figure; it would bring insecurity, since Babylon's destruction is already declared. The effect is to make the explicit exhortation of 18:5 all the more "logical" and persuasive.

The third angel's message returns to a more overtly deliberative mode. This angel seeks to dissuade hearers from an alternative course of action by discussing its consequences (a typical commonplace in ex-

hortation and dissuasion). If honor and safety were the chief components of deliberation (thus the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*; Quintilian was content to name "honor" as the sole topic, while Aristotle names "the honorable, beneficial, and pleasurable" as the three guiding principles), engagement with the cult of the beast would be the most disadvantageous path for any believer to take. Participation there would mean exposure to everlasting torment at God's judgment. This would not merely mean danger for one's physical well-being (putting it mildly), but also public degradation and loss of honor as the angels and Lamb bear witness to one's punishment (βασανισθήσεται ἐν πυρὶ καὶ θεῶν ἑνώπιον ἀγγέλων ἁγίων καὶ ἑνώπιον τοῦ ἀρνίου, 14:10).¹⁹ If one seeks for advantage for eternity (honor and security at God's judgment and thereafter), worship of the beast becomes a course to avoid at all costs.

John has already shown, however, that avoidance of such worship does come at a high cost--13:15-17 speaks of the loss of economic enfranchisement and eventually death as the result of abstaining from the worship of the beast. Here, then, the argumentative texture of 14:6-13 shows itself to be even richer. John is not merely arguing that one course of action is better than the other. He is acknowledging that exclusive worship of the one God brings danger and dishonor (the potential for loss of status and property, and exposure to shameful execution), but setting temporary disadvantage against "eternal" advantage. This is a technique common to subcultures and countercultures, whose members must frequently accept some degree of disadvantage as the price of maintaining their alternative culture. This requires, of course, that members accept the counter-definitions of reality which allow for such a contrast.

The concluding claim in 14:6-13 is the makarism pronouncing those who "die in the Lord from this time on"²⁰ as "blessed" (favored, honorable). This turns the passage back toward epideictic discourse,

19. P. E. Hughes (*The Book of the Revelation* [Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 1990] 172) finds it necessary to explain that the idolaters will not continue to be punished in the presence of the Lamb and the holy angels, since their punishment is described in 2 Thess 1:7-9 (but also present in Rev 21:27; 22:14-15) as consisting in "eternal destruction and exclusion from the presence of the Lord." This harmonizing tendency prevents him from considering the different but complimentary effects which might be produced by, on the one hand, speaking here of public dishonor and speaking later of disprivilege in the form of exclusion. Attention to these messages as attempts at persuasion in the context of an honor culture (where public dishonor is a most feared evil) explains why this punishment should take place in the sight of the angels and the Lamb, so that it is no longer "difficult to say" (Ford, *Revelation*, 249). Roloff (*Revelation*, 176) has similar difficulties with the passage, but it is precisely here that attention to the cultural context of the first hearers can clarify "what is particularly strange to today's readers."

20. G. W. Buchanan (*The Book of Revelation: Its Introduction and Prophecy* [Lewiston: Mellen, 1993] 376) translates this as "until now," although this option for ἄπὸ when used with expressions of time is not supported by LSJ or BAGD.

because those who embody a certain quality are praised as "honorable" and therefore worthy of imitation by honorable people. The larger context of the book makes it clear that the specific behavior or complex of commitments which led to the death of these "blessed ones" involved abstaining from the worship of the beast: the proximity of the definition of "holy ones" as "those who keep the commandments of God and faith with Jesus" in 14:12 also contributes to John's construction of a pattern of noble behavior for his audiences to imitate. There are two connected rationales given for calling these people who are extremely marginalized "blessed." They enjoy the "rest" which will forever be denied those who worship the beast (14:11); their works follow them, to give favorable testimony on their behalf at God's judgment (20:12-13).²¹ By this means, John is able to portray the course of action which would reduce tension between the Christian culture and the dominant culture as the path to greater "tension" in eschatological terms, while the path to maintaining—even increasing—tension between the Christian culture and dominant culture becomes the path to "rest."²²

Sensory-Aesthetic Texture

Rev 14:6-13 evokes the senses of seeing (14:6) and hearing (14:7, 8, 9, 13) as a means first of reaffirming John's role as the transmitter of information from an extrasensory, invisible source and as a means of

21. Mounce (*Revelation*, 276) seeks to establish a dissociation between the significance of "works" following the martyrs here in Rev 14:13 and the way in which "works" follow the dead in "the Jewish sense of accompanying the righteous to judgment to win them divine approval." The Spirit, however, refers to the works' following the righteous as the reason for their ability to "rest" in this state of being "blessed"—being honored before God or favored by God. Mounce's emphasis on not "winning" divine approval here, of course, results from our ongoing involvement with a "works" versus "faith" debate (see also his treatment of Rev 20:12-13). In this case, hearing this passage in our post-Reformation setting may hinder us from understanding the rhetorical effect of the pronouncement upon the hearers in the first century. Mounce goes on to say that "faithfulness . . . unto death is not a legalistic work that merits eternal bliss, but a manifestation of their devotion to Christ." Setting NT discussions of "faith" and "works" in the context of the reciprocal obligations of patronage does much to clarify the interrelatedness of these concepts. The first-century hearer would be in no danger of understanding martyrdom as a "legalistic work" but as the obligation of the grateful client.

22. Harrington (*Revelation*, 152) correctly points out that the makarism need not apply only to those who are violently killed but also to all who "die in the Lord." The fact that John uses ἀποθνήσκω rather than a passive form of ἀποκτείνω strongly supports this observation. On the one hand, then, the makarism encourages those who do indeed face extreme marginalization (danger and dishonor) for their confession but does so in a way that elevates the value of remaining faithful to God and Jesus unto death, regardless of the manner of that death.

inviting the hearer into the visionary experience itself. The audiences are continually urged to "see" what John "sees," "hear" what John "hears," and thus "see" the visible world as John sees. This participation in the visionary experience is facilitated as John involves more and more of the senses in the unfolding of the vision: the sense of smell is engaged by the "wine" of Babylon (14:8), the "wine" of God's wrath (14:10), and finally the burning of flesh mixed with sulfur as the smoke of torment rises before the hearer (14:10-11). Even the sense of touch is not ignored, as the mark of the beast is placed upon the hand or forehead. John's choice here of where to put the mark (also establishing a contrast with the seal of God upon the foreheads of the saints) is significant—these are the zones of recognition or status (the head) and public, purposeful action (the hand). The viscera is included, both in the "fornication" of Babylon and in the drunkenness. There is an interesting repetition of references to the movement of falling down—as worshipers before God (14:7), as Babylon falls (14:8), or as worshipers before the beast and its image (14:9, 11). The correlation of "falling down" before the beast and the smoke of torment "rising up" impresses itself upon the hearer—if what "goes down" in homage to the beast "must go up" in smoke, the attractiveness of imperial cult diminishes considerably.

INTERTEXTURE

Oral-Scribal Intertexture

Throughout Revelation, John makes no explicit reference to other texts (the closest one gets to this is 15:3-4, where "they sing the Song of Moses"). Phrases, and even whole sentences, from the Jewish Scriptures are woven into the fabric of Revelation, but rather than cite Isaiah, for example, John will place Isaiah's words on the lips of an angel. Thus, the boundaries between recitation and recontextualization are somewhat blurred in Revelation. The excerpts from known texts are sometimes rather long, but they are always recontextualized within the narrative of the vision rather than presented as entering from "outside" the vision from some older text.

Rev 14:6-13 appears to interact extensively with Daniel 3. In this regard, the passage continues an intertextual conversation begun earlier in Revelation, especially Revelation 13. The conversation begins in 14:6, where an angel now proclaims the message ἐπὶ πᾶν ἔθνος καὶ φυλὴν καὶ γλῶσσαν καὶ λαόν. This list of groups addressed by the angel, with its effect of comprehensiveness and universality, echoes Dan 3:3, in which a herald proclaims a message to a similarly comprehensive audience (a representation of the scope of Nebuchadnezzar's rule):

ὁ κῆρυξ ἔβόα ἐν ἰσχύι ὑμῖν λέγεται λαοὶ φυλαὶ γλῶσσαι.²³ The three groupings appear in Rev 14:6, there extended to include a fourth (ἔθνος; but cf. Dan 3:3 OG, which includes ἔθνη καὶ χῶραι, λαοὶ καὶ γλῶσσαι). This repetition is very much in keeping with John's depiction of Rome as the new Babylon (a place-name shared by Dan 3:1 and Rev 14:8)—both share a similar scope of world domination, with the possible implication that Rome's is even more expansive.²⁴

The herald's decree, of course, concerns the demand for worship of the idol which Nebuchadnezzar had erected (ἐποίησεν εἰκόνα χρυσοῦν, Dan 3:1): "Whenever you hear the sound of the trumpet . . . you will fall down and worship the image (προσκυνεῖτε τῇ εἰκόνι) of gold which Nebuchadnezzar erected. Whoever does not fall down and worship it, in that hour he or she will be cast into the furnace which burns with fire (ὅς ἂν μὴ πεσὼν προσκυνήσῃ αὐτῇ τῇ ὥρᾳ ἐμβληθήσεται εἰς τὴν κάμινον τοῦ πυρὸς τὴν καιομένην, 3:4-6)." This decree becomes a refrain throughout Daniel 3, as it is first enacted by the "peoples, tribes, and tongues" (3:7), recited by the Chaldeans who inform against the Judeans who refuse to obey (3:10-11), and finally recited by Nebuchadnezzar after he brings the three young Judeans before him

23. Buchanan (*Revelation*, 366), despite his interest in providing a thorough discussion of intertextuality, does not mention Dan 3:3 in his discussion of Rev 14:6. The reason for this may be found in his attempt to read this verse as addressing "the sojourners in the land [namely Palestinian residents] of every nation, tribe, language, and people"—thus specifically the Gentile residents of Palestine! Stressing the universality of the angel's message would be contrary to this reading (which has been tellingly "overlooked, not only by John of Patmos, but by most New Testament scholars ever since" [*ibid.*, 369-70]). The problem with this reading, of course, is that the Greek cannot be contorted sufficiently to support Buchanan's translation, such that the phrase "and to every nation," etc., becomes a qualifier of the "sojourners," even if the καὶ which introduces "nation," etc., should be taken as epexegetical. If one were to accept the suggestion that "those dwelling on the earth" should be read as "those sojourning in the [holy] land," then one would understand the first angel to proclaim his message "over those sojourning in the land and over every nation and tribe and people and tongue." I would suggest that Buchanan suppresses the discussion of Dan 3:3 at this point in his "intertextual" commentary precisely because that reference would lead the reader away from his conclusion.

24. One of the fundamental commitments of sociorhetorical interpretation is attentiveness to resonances between the NT text and Greco-Roman literature. Plutarch, in describing the "Fortune of the Romans" (*Mor.* 317C), speaks of the dominion of Rome extending not only over "nations and peoples but foreign kingdoms beyond the sea (ἔθνη καὶ δήμους ἐν αὐτῇ, τοῦτο δ' ἄλλοφύλους καὶ διαποντίους βασιλέων ἡγεμονίας); and then at last the world found stability and security, when the controlling power entered into a single, unwavering cycle and world order of peace." The language in Plutarch is not nearly close enough to Revelation to suggest intertexture at the oral-scribal level, which clearly looks to Daniel 3. It is nevertheless intriguing to discover a non-Jewish Greek author depicting the scope of Roman rule with a string of terms for people-groups (nations, peoples, foreign peoples) giving a similar impression of universality.

(3:15). This decree is reconfigured in Rev 14:9-11 in a most intriguing way. Now, in the message of the third angel, a similar decree is uttered, but the effect is reversed: "if anyone does worship the beast and its image (Εἴ τις προσκυνεῖ . . . τὴν εἰκόνα) . . . he or she will be tormented with fire and sulfur (βασσανισθήσεται ἐν πυρὶ καὶ θείῳ)." The reconfigured decree now posits far worse punishment, although strikingly like in kind, for the worshiper of the image.

The decree in Daniel 3 serves to precipitate the same crisis as one finds in Revelation 14 (and throughout Revelation 13-20): does one worship the image and escape punishment in this life, or does one reserve his or her worship for the one God. The three Judeans respond to the king's ultimatum by pointing out that they are committed to worship only the one "Lord whom we fear (κύριος ἡμῶν ὃν φοβούμεθα, OG; Th reads "whom we serve," ὃν ἡμεῖς λατρεύομεν, 3:17)." In light of this commitment, they refuse to "worship the image" which Nebuchadnezzar erected (τῇ εἰκόνι τῇ χρυσοῦ ἣ ἔστησας οὐ προσκυνούμεν, 3:18 Th; OG essentially agrees). The result of this stance is, of course, that they are delivered from the flames, moving Nebuchadnezzar to give a new decree forbidding the "slander" of their God. The incompatibility of "serving" or "fearing" the God of heaven and "worshipping" an image or another god is basic to Rev 14:6-13, which reconfigures the three young Judeans' analysis of the situation in the first and third angels' messages. The first calls "every nation, tribe, people, and language" to fear and worship the one God; the third demonstrates the incompatibility of "true" piety with idolatrous expressions. Indeed, the first angel's command is a reconfiguration of Nebuchadnezzar's second decree, expressing positively ("give God honor") what Nebuchadnezzar had put negatively ("anyone who speaks dishonorable things").

The policy of the three young men, who "gave over their bodies to be burned in order neither to serve nor to worship any other god beside their God (ἵνα μὴ λατρεύσωσι μηδὲ προσκυνήσωσι θεῷ ἑτέρῳ ἀλλ' ἢ τῷ θεῷ, 3:95)," became a source of honor to these Judeans. This conclusion to their story remains foundational to Rev 14:6-13 as well, as those who "die in the Lord" as a result of not succumbing to the pressure to worship the beast's image stand in honor before God (14:13).

The hearer of Rev 14:6-13 is thus taken into an extended conversation with Daniel 3. In the reconfiguration of the earlier text, John presents the choice facing the three young Judeans as the final ultimatum presented to every nation, tribe, people, and tongue. The most dire penalty, however, attends not refusing to worship the image but succumbing. This intertextual dialogue is enriched by several other arenas of oral-scribal intertexture evoked by Revelation (and, to a large extent, by Daniel 3 as well). These involve the rich meanings of

"fearing God," "worshiping" God versus worshiping an idol, and identifying God as "the maker of heaven and earth and sea" as these terms are developed within the larger corpus of Jewish texts.

The God of Israel is frequently identified as the "maker of heaven and earth" (Isa 37:16; 2 Kgs 19:15; cf. Gen 1:1; Isa 45:18; Bel 1:5) or the "maker of heaven and earth and sea" (τὸν ποιήσαντα τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν τὴν θάλασσαν καὶ πάντα τὰ ἐν αὐτοῖς, LXX Ps 145:6; cf. Exod 20:11; Neh 9:6; Acts 4:24). What is striking is that in many of these places God is being thus identified in a context which stresses his uniqueness—that this God is God "alone" (σὺ εἶ αὐτὸς κύριος μόνος, Neh 9:6; Exod 20:11 may be included, given its proximity to 20:2-5, the fundamental decree of monolatry and prohibition of idolatry), sometimes specifically God "alone over all the kingdoms of the inhabited world" (σὺ θεὸς μόνος εἶ πάσης βασιλείας τῆς οἰκουμένης, Isa 37:16; 2 Kgs 19:15). In the context of LXX Ps 145:6, to which Rev 14:7 comes closest in terms of recitation (τῷ ποιήσαντι τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν καὶ θάλασσαν; change of case only), another dimension is brought into the conversation. This God is also the one who brings justice to the wronged and removes the way of sinners (Ps 145:7-9). This element may be reconfigured in Rev 14:7 as the rationale for "fearing God," namely that "the hour of his judgment came." The "maker of heaven and earth" is seen in a similar role in Isa 37:16, where Isaiah calls for God to regard the insolent and impious words of Sennacherib and uphold God's honor and the honor of his servants in the face of Sennacherib's threat.

"Fearing God" appears to have a similarly specific range of evocations in Jewish texts. Most frequently, the meaning of "fearing God" is "keeping God's commandments," the covenant stipulations of the Torah. The phrase appears in Lev 19:14, 32; 25:17, 36; 25:43 linked with very specific stipulations such as respecting an elder, not oppressing one's neighbor, and not putting a stumbling block in the path of the blind. "Fearing God" is enacted through obedience to these very horizontal commands. The phrase runs throughout Deuteronomy as well (6:2, 24; 10:12; 17:18; 31:12-13) as a synonym for keeping the just decrees or commandments of God. This same connotation governs "fearing God" in 2 Kgs 17:35-38; LXX Esth 2:20; Tob 4:21. That John shares in considering obedience to God a positive value is demonstrated by his definition of the "holy ones" in 14:12 as those "who keep the commandments of God" as well as "keep faith with Jesus." When the first angel, then, bids all people "fear God," he calls them to honor God's commandments, primarily the basic commandment to have no gods besides the One God.²⁵ The first angel's

25. Mounce (*Revelation*, 271) says succinctly that "to fear God is to reverence him," but this hardly helps the reader understand the evocative power of the first angel's

message reconfigures a hope expressed frequently throughout the Psalms and other hymnic passages in Jewish texts that "all the nations in all the earth will genuinely turn and fear God and will forsake all their idols" (Tob 14:6; cf. Ps 85:9, which shares with Rev 14:7 the words "worship," "glorify," and "create"). This call, however, goes repeatedly unanswered within the vision (see 9:20-21; 16:8-11).

The second component of the first angel's message, namely, the command to "give him glory" (δότε αὐτῷ δόξαν), also resonates with a large number of specific Jewish texts—too large to survey here. It would be difficult to choose one or two of these texts as the specific texts with which Revelation is in dialogue on the basis of the command alone. In light of the foregoing discussion, however, two texts emerge as particularly important because they speak of "giving God glory" in close proximity to other concerns which also appear in Rev 14:6-13, Daniel 3, and the series of textual echoes surrounding the "fear" specifically of the God "who made heaven and earth." These are Isa 42:8-12 and Jer 13:16 (the latter is given in the margin of the Nestle-Aland 27th edition). The wording in Rev 14:7 (δότε αὐτῷ δόξαν) is especially close to Jer 13:16 (δότε τῷ κυρίῳ θεῷ ὑμῶν δόξαν), but more compelling is the observation that in both texts "glory" is to be given God in light of some impending crisis. In Jer 13:16, this crisis is God's bringing of darkness which makes the foot to slip, whereas in Revelation it is the arrival of the hour of judgment. Giving glory to God would be the course to choose in order to avoid suffering God's punishment. Isa 42:12 declares concerning inhabitants of widespread regions of the earth that "they will give glory to God (δώσουσιν τῷ θεῷ δόξαν) and announce his virtues." This declaration, however, is the conclusion to a passage beginning with speech from God's own mouth: "I am the Lord God. . . . I will not give my glory to another or my virtues to idols" (Isa 42:8). Once more, this broader context is well suited to the broader context of the first angel's message: glory is to be given to the true God (that is, the one who "made heaven and earth") but withheld from idols and other beings at any cost, since God will not share God's honor with such things.

John's use of the verb προσκυνεῖν throughout Rev 14:6-13 (once with reference to the worship owed the "maker of heaven and earth," twice with reference to the worship of the beast and its image), as throughout Revelation as a whole, brings his discourse into dialogue

message (and, of course, begs the question of what constitutes reverence). Exploration of intertexture (whether oral-scribal or cultural) and social texture (the responsibilities of gratitude) offer helpful resources for fleshing out for the modern reader—indeed, for the person seeking to apply the text in a community of faith—to discover the evocations of "fearing" and "revering" one who is identified as a "Creator" in ways that older, innerdisciplinary modes of interpretation (here, a philologically-based explanation) do not.

with a conversation at the very core of Jewish identity. Once again, the number of actual texts with which Revelation interacts is very large, and it would be pointless to argue that Revelation has an "intertextual" relationship with one text more than another. The Hexateuch, for example, is replete with injunctions to "fear" or "serve" the One God and to avoid the "worship" of other gods, those gods of the non-Jewish peoples (οὐ γὰρ μὴ προσκυνήσητε θεῶ ἑτέρῳ Exod 23:34; cf. Exod 20:3-5; 34:13; Lev 26:1; Deut 5:9; 8:19; 11:16; 30:17; Josh 23:16). The prohibition of the worship specifically of idols is prominent within the texts listed here.²⁶ The word "worship" in the context of declaring what is due God and what is not due idols acts as a sort of "echo" of a conversation carried on among many prominent texts. Revelation appears to recontextualize this pervasive and prominent Jewish discourse on the topic of proper worship versus impious worship. The weight of this central, defining discourse is now brought to bear on the particular phenomenon of Roman imperial cult, occasionally extended to the idolatry which accompanies Greco-Roman piety (cf. the worship of the dragon in Rev 13:4). The nations are called to fulfill the hope of the psalmists that the Gentiles would "worship" the God who "made" them (Ps 85:9; cf. Ps 21:28; 65:4; 71:11), while the idolater is reminded of God's determination to destroy and degrade the one who worships idols (see especially Deut 8:19: ἔσται ἔαν . . . προσκυνήνης αὐτοῖς . . . ὅτι ἀπωλεία ἀπολείσθε). In this conversation, Revelation reconfigures both the universalist hope of Jewish texts in 14:7 and the expectation that idolaters will be put to shame. LXX Ps 96:7, for example, expresses the wish: ἀίσχυθητῶσαν πάντες οἱ προσκυνοῦντες τοῖς γλυπτοῖς οἱ ἐγκαυχώμενοι ἐν τοῖς εἰδώλοις! This wish is reconfigured in the third angel's decree, which declares that anyone worshipping the beast and its image will be punished "before the Lamb and the holy angels," that is, degraded in a public arena.

So far our discussion has focused mainly on the messages of the first and third angels. The second angel's message also invites intertextual exploration. It begins with a striking "recitation" of Isa 21:9. This "recitation" is inexact, and its status as "recitation" is also suspect because John gives no hint that he is referring to a text outside of the one which he is writing. More properly, then, it is a "recontextualization" of Isaiah's declaration of Babylon's fall.

נְפִלָה נְפִלָה בְּבָבֶל (MT Isa 21:9)

πέπτωκεν Βαβυλῶν (LXX Isa 21:9)

Ἔπεσεν ἔπεσεν Βαβυλῶν ἡ μεγάλη (Rev 14:8)

26. Ford (*Revelation*, 248) has also affirmed the connection between the first angel's message and "the reaffirmation of the decalogue and the worship of one God."

John's declaration follows more the structure of the MT version of Isa 21:9, with the repetition of the verb "it fell" (a number of textual witnesses actually clean up Rev 14:8 by removing the repetition). John also appears to have changed the tense of the verb from perfect to aorist, possibly influenced by the similar declaration in LXX Jer 28:8 (ἔπεσεν Βαβυλῶν, English Bible 51:8). This Jeremiah text emerges as an important resource, providing much of the language for the second angel's message.²⁷ The charge brought against Babylon in both texts is very similar:

ἀπὸ τοῦ οἴνου αὐτῆς ἐπίσαν ἔθνη (LXX Jer 28:7, English Bible 51:7)
 ἐκ τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς πεπότικεν πάντα τὰ ἔθνη
 (Rev 14:8)

John expands on Jeremiah's charge, describing the specific bouquet of "her wine" (LXX Jer 28:7) as "the violent passion of her fornication" (Rev 14:8).²⁸ Moreover, John has conflated Jeremiah's description of Babylon as a "golden cup making all the earth drunken" (μεθύσκον πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν) with his statement that "nations drank" of her wine. John combines "all the earth" and the unspecified "nations" to produce "all the nations," and has changed "they drank" to "she gave them to drink" so as to capture Babylon's active participation in this process (thus capturing the sense of the μεθύσκον in LXX Jer 28:7).²⁹ The second angel's message especially invites us to ask why John insists on weaving so many pieces of "authoritative" texts into his vision but refuses to refer to them as such (thus scores of recontextualizations but few if any recitations). By recontextualizing the content of authoritative "prophecy," John lends considerable authority to his own visions. John appears also to participate in a typological construction which sees Rome as the antitype of Babylon (cf. also 4 Ezra; 2 Baruch), and which makes Isaiah's and Jeremiah's prophecies about the type applicable to the antitype. Rome, guilty of the same crimes as Babylon in the eyes of John (as of the authors of 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch), will most assuredly fall under the judgment of the same God, whose standards remain constant.

By introducing the concept of "fornication" in this second message in close proximity to the focus on the dangers of falling into

27. See *ibid.*

28. Mounce (*Revelation*, 272; cf. also Roloff, *Revelation*, 175) observes that the awkwardness of the string of genitives ("wine of the wrath of her fornication") is best explained by John's conviction that "Rome's seductive practices" are themselves a part of God's wrath. The conversation with Jeremiah, who depicts Babylon as a "golden cup in the Lord's hand," would certainly tend to support this reading.

29. As a further indication of the rich conversation John is having with the Jeremiah text, we may note that LXX Jer 28:6 announces that "this is the time of the Lord's vengeance upon her" (καίρος ἐκδικήσεως αὐτῆς ἐστὶν παρὰ κυρίου), which is echoed in the first angel's message that "the hour of his judgment came" (Rev 14:7).

idolatrous worship in the third message, John creates a reference to the incident recorded in Num 25:1-2: "Israel stayed in Sattin and the people defiled itself by fornicating (ἐβεβηλώθη ὁ λαὸς ἐκπορνεῦσαι) with the daughters of Moab: they called them to the sacrifices of their idols and the people ate of their sacrifices and worshiped their idols (προσεκύνησαν τοῖς εἰδώλοις αὐτῶν)." This reference would be particularly strong since John had used it previously in Revelation, accusing "Jezebel" and the "Nicolaitans," those figures with whom John vies for authority to direct the churches, of repeating the deception of Balaam, who instructed the Moabites in subverting Israel's loyalty to the one God (Rev 2:14-15, 20-21). Involvement with Babylon— participation in the prosperity and peace and ideology of Rome— amounts, in John's view, to the "fornication" which leads to idolatry and, finally, the wrath of God. Num 25:1-2, therefore, functions as a strong support for John's case for maintaining high boundaries between the Christian culture and dominant culture.

Several other examples of oral-scribal intertexture are present in this passage, mainly centered around the "wine of the violent passion of the wrath of God" (14:10). This image is constructed from a number of Jewish scriptural texts which speak of God's judgment as a "cup" full of "wine" that is both "mixed" and "unmixed":

ποτήριον ἐν χειρὶ κυρίου οἴνου ἀκράτου πλήρες κεράσματος (Ps 74:9)
 τὸ ποτήριον τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ ἀκράτου τούτου (Jer 32:15)
 τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ κεκερασμένου ἀκράτου ἐν τῷ
 ποτηρίῳ τῆς ὀργῆς αὐτοῦ (Rev 14:10)

The strange image of wine that is both "mixed" (with spices, to make it more potent) and "unmixed" (with water, to weaken its force)³⁰ suggests strongly that John is interacting with Ps 74:9, the only other LXX text to contain both words. John interprets this image as the cup of God's "anger," God's desire for satisfaction against those who have met his universal beneficence with ingratitude, fashioning an even more fearsome image with which to warn his audiences to remain steadfast in their monolatry. The connection between the wine and God's judgment is evident from the list of those who drink from the cup:

πίονται πάντες οἱ ἁμαρτωλοὶ τῆς γῆς (Ps 74:9)
 πίνεται [τις προσκυνεῖ τὸ θηρίον καὶ τὴν εἰκόνα αὐτοῦ] (Rev 14:9-10)

John further defines the psalmist's "sinners of the earth" specifically as those who engage in idolatrous worship, transgressing the first and primary commandment. This particularization is in keeping with

30. Thus Mounce, *Revelation*, 273.

John's specific focus on the question of whom to honor with cultic worship, a point where his conflict with the Nicolaitans and Jezebel appears to have crystallized. In describing the punishment of this "one" who worships the beast and its image, John draws heavily on Isaiah's description of Jerusalem's enemy (in Isaiah, Edom):³¹

νυκτὸς καὶ ἡμέρας καὶ οὐ σβεσθήσεται εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα χρόνον καὶ ἀναβήσεται ὁ καπνὸς αὐτῆς ἄνω εἰς γενεάς (Isa 34:10)
ὁ καπνὸς τοῦ βασιανισμοῦ αὐτῶν εἰς αἰῶνας αἰώνων ἀναβαίνει καὶ οὐκ ἔχουσιν ἀνάπαυσιν³² ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτός (Rev 14:10)

Rev 14:6-13, then, continues John's practice of recontextualizing and reconfiguring authoritative Jewish texts without calling attention explicitly to the fact that he is referring to extant documents beyond his own. John thus brings the authoritative voices to bear directly on his audiences in their new context. In this passage, one of the principle effects of John's conversation with other texts and use of terms laden with specific and powerful connotations is to place the audience's situation within the context of the people of God's perpetual call to worship the One God and avoid any semblance of worship of another god or an idol. John's interaction with these texts, then, serves to push his audience toward rededication to monolatry at any cost (cf. especially the discussion of Daniel 3). Another important set of textual reverberations centers on the indictment and sentence passed upon Babylon, which John enacts now upon the new Babylon, Rome.

Cultural Intertexture

The earlier discussion of God as the "maker of heaven and earth" and of the opposition of the "worship" of the true God to the "worship" of idols could equally well belong here in a discussion of "cultural" intertexture as opposed to "oral-scribal" intertexture, since there is not a single text with which John appears to interact exclusively, but rather several texts (even a whole tradition, in the case of "worship"). Whatever the exact nature of this intertexture, John depends on his audience understanding the larger conversation—one which is specific to Jewish culture (and secondarily to Christian culture)—in order for his vision to have its full impact upon them. John relies on "cultural knowledge" to have been transmitted to his audience at

31. Numerous scholars (e.g., Roloff, *Revelation*, 176; Harrington, *Revelation*, 150; Buchanan, *Revelation*, 373) have also noted that "fire and sulfur" in 14:10 reminds the hearers of the fate of Sodom, which was destroyed by God with "sulfur and fire" (Gen 19:24; cf. Luke 17:29, which also inverts the order of Gen 19:24 to "fire and sulfur").

32. Ford (*Revelation*, 249) points helpfully to *1 Enoch* 63:1-2, 6 for another instance where "rest" from eternal torment is not granted to those who sinned against God.

numerous other points throughout Rev 14:6-13. In a number of these places, John will reinforce, and even redefine, cultural knowledge.

As in most every passage in Revelation, John articulates a cosmology which is peculiar to the Jewish culture. This is most apparent in the appearance of the three "angels" who bear messages (14:6, 8, 9) and who form the entourage of God and the Lamb (14:10). The hearers must understand that these beings are superhuman servants of God who frequently bear messages to humanity, serving as vehicles for revelation. Their messages are thus "authoritative," for they come from God's own self and are proclaimed at God's behest. Another spirit being which John includes in this passage is the "Spirit" (14:13). The "Spirit" of God is a feature of Jewish culture but is given special prominence within the Christian culture. Particularly in Johannine literature, the Spirit is a witness to the truth of God (John 16:12-15; 1 John 5:7-9). It is generally held that John the Seer is addressing churches which are informed by Johannine thought (though not exclusively informed by this strain of Christian culture), and Rev 14:13 presents the Spirit as a reliable voice which can "bear witness" and "certify the truth" of the claim that those who die in the Lord are "honorable" and "favored." It would thus appear to build on this specifically Johannine Christian cultural teaching.

John appears to interact with Christian culture in his reference to the "eternal gospel" which the first angel declares "to every nation and tribe and tongue and people" (14:6). Some commentators read this as a reference to that universal proclamation of "the gospel of the kingdom" (Matt 24:14) which precedes the "end."³³ Nowhere else

33. Caird (*Revelation*, 182-83) comes out forcefully in favor of this view. He suggests that it is an "absurdity" to suppose that the word can refer to anything but "good news," which he understands to mean news that is received as "good" by those who hear it. Caird dismisses the fact that 14:7 contains no invitation to receive the benefits of Jesus' ransoming ministry as due to John's expectation that his readers will fill it in "with the full rich content of the apostolic preaching." The problem here, of course, is that it is by no means so clear how the hearers should "fill in" the content of the term "gospel." Caird ignores (or does not know) the resonances that this word has beyond strictly Christian cultural meanings—resonances which would, however, be familiar to the Christians who were socialized in, and continued to live within, the dominant culture. Harrington (*Revelation*, 151) follows Caird closely in this identification. Even within Christian culture, however, "gospel" could represent simply the call to worship the One God and to turn away from idols, as in Acts 14:15. Strangely, Harrington (*Revelation*, 149) quotes this verse in its entirety without critiquing Caird, who surely would have found Acts 14:15 a pale shadow of what he thought "gospel" should conjure up in the minds of the first hearers. Roloff (*Revelation*, 174) offers an apt critique of imposing upon 14:6-7 the doctrine of a worldwide mission prior to the end. Ford's suggestion (see below), which does justice both to the Greco-Roman (dominant cultural) resonances of the term and to the given content of the angel's message in 14:7, is the strongest among the commentators surveyed.

in the New Testament, however, is the "gospel" given the epithet "eternal." John appears rather to be redefining an aspect of Christian culture, filling out the meaning of "gospel" specifically as the announcement of the "hour of judgment" (the content of the angel's "actual" speech in 14:7), the full enactment of God's accession to the "kingdom of this world" (Rev 11:15).³⁴ The proper "response" to this "good news" is to "fear God," "give God glory," and "worship" the One, true God. At this juncture, John may also be alluding to Greco-Roman cultural knowledge, specifically the "good news" announced to the world at Augustus's birth (cf. the Priene Inscription³⁵) or Vespasian's accession (see Josephus, *J.W.* 4.656).³⁶ This inscription and its importance as a text with which Luke's infancy narrative interacts should push the interpreter to consider possible ramifications of John's conversation with this cultural allusion. The imperial cult arose largely as a response of the grateful provinces to the hopes for peace and security which Augustus's victory brought. John would interrupt this phenomenon and call for worship of the One God in response to the "good news" about God's justice.

The "hour of judgment" refers to a conviction shared by the Jewish and Christian cultures--namely, the belief that God has set a day when God will call the nations of the earth to "account" for their conduct, punishing those who have violated God's decrees and rewarding those who have honored them. John interacts with specifically Christian culture in the choice of "hour" over "day," for the Synoptic Gospels show a marked preference for the "hour" of the appearing of the Son of Man over the "day." John himself recontextualizes these Son of Man sayings in Rev 3:3, where the church in Sardis is warned that they "will not know at what hour [Jesus] will come upon" them.

Referring to Rome as "Babylon" is peculiar to Jewish and Christian culture, appearing most prominently in the years following the destruction of Jerusalem (thus 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch, and possibly 1 Pet 5:13). Babylon was known for its political ascendancy over the other known nations of the earth (save for Egypt), its destruction of Jerusalem, and its captivity of large portions of the population of Jerusalem. After the destruction of the Second Temple by Roman forces, Rome becomes a second Babylon. Jewish apocalyptists, like the authors of 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch, attempt to work through the traumas of their own recent

34. Thus, rightly, Ford, *Revelation*, 247; Mounce, *Revelation*, 270.

35. The text of this famous inscription can be found in F. W. Danker, *Benefactor* (St. Louis: Clayton, 1982) 215-18.

36. Ford (*Revelation*, 247) includes an excellent discussion of the resonances here with the Roman imperial overtones of "gospel." She understands the angel's proclamation to signify the eternal sovereignty of God, as opposed to "the transitory nature of the emperor's rule."

history by returning, as it were, to the first destruction of the Temple. Particularly in 4 Ezra, however, the fictional setting is transcended by the visions themselves, as complaints about Babylon give way to apocalyptic visions of the succession of the twelve Caesars and the explicit reapplication of earlier apocalyptic visions which were also set fictionally in Babylon (Daniel 7; cf. 4 Ezra 11-12). This opens the way for the application (and expansion) of prophetic denunciations of historical Babylon to the contemporary "Babylon," Rome.

John refers in 14:12 to "holy ones," a term which is frequent in Jewish and Christian literature. The term sometimes designates superhuman beings who form part of God's entourage (as in Ps 88:8; *1 Enoch* 1:9-10) but more frequently refers to the human beings "set apart" by their dedication to the Law of the One God, who obey the command ἅγιοι ἔσεσθε ὅτι ἅγιος εἶμι ἐγὼ κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὑμῶν (Lev 11:44 and repeatedly throughout Leviticus and Numbers). Sometimes the distinction between these two connotations is blurred, as in Wis 5:5, where the righteous martyr shares the lot of "the sons of God" and "God's holy ones." That John has in mind primarily humans who have "set themselves apart" is shown in the grouping "holy ones, apostles, and prophets" in 18:20 and "prophets, holy ones, and all those who have been slain upon the earth" in 18:24. John's "holy ones" bleed and die like any mortal, and so his primary field of reference must be mortals. John's decision to utilize the cultural epithet "holy ones" for the positive models in his vision serves his primary social agenda for the churches—namely, to reinforce their "set-apartness" from the dominant culture and its perpetuation of its own ideology through such means as imperial cult and cults of the traditional gods. John further refines this term by giving it the definition "those who keep the commandments of God and who keep faith with Jesus" (14:12). Jewish culture would agree that "holy ones" are those who obey God's commandments, these "commandments" being specifically the Torah. John adds the qualification that "holy ones" must also keep faith with Jesus (or possibly "faith as enacted by Jesus"). This locates John specifically within Christian culture, although a segment of Christian culture which is still very much in tune with its Jewish cultural heritage.³⁷

37. Buchanan (*Revelation*, 375-76) wishes to consider the phrase "the faith of Jesus" (which he actually renders "testimony of Jesus" here in 14:12, apparently being influenced by the occurrence of τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ earlier, in 12:17, to misread τὴν πίστιν Ἰησοῦ) an interpolation into the text by John (whom he considers merely the translator) or some other early Christian. On what basis? "It seems to be an intrusion into the text, which makes good sense without the phrase." For this phrase to be out of place, however, one would also have to excise chap. 5 (despite its stylistic unity; cf. with chaps. 4 and 7:9-17), references to "the Lamb" in chaps. 6 and 7 and the like. The poverty of argument in favor of regarding this an "intrusion" (it "seems" like one) shows

The closing statement by "the Spirit" contains important allusions to a "rest" which follows the doing of "works" and into which "rest" one's "works" follow the doer. The correlation of works and rest evokes the story of the first Sabbath and the Exodus version of the command to observe the Sabbath. This is, however, read in a particularly eschatological way (cf. Heb 4:1-11), according to which the faithful are invited to enter into God's rest following the end of their labors on earth. John appears to be quite familiar with the Jewish notion of judgment in accordance with one's works (Rev 20:12-13). This is also a familiar topic in Pauline Christian culture (cf. Rom 2:6-16; 2 Cor 5:9). John is incorporating these cultural allusions as a means of assuring those who "die in the Lord" that their work of faithful witness to the One God will follow them after death and assure them a place among the "blessed."

Social Intertexture

The first angel addresses every ἔθνος καὶ φυλὴν καὶ γλῶσσαν καὶ λαόν (14:6), and with these four terms brings social groupings into the text. Each term was available as a means of defining one group or social body over against others. These are largely overlapping markers of identity, the overall effect of which is to give an impression of universality (reminiscent of the impression made in Daniel 3, where Nebuchadnezzar's authority extends over "peoples, tribes, and tongues"). John presents the "eternal gospel" of God's impending judgment and the conflict between the Lamb and the beast as being of such a scope and magnitude as to involve all people. This has the important effect of magnifying the enterprise in which the Christian minority culture is engaged; the recurrence of this phrase throughout the book gives the group greater significance. John's subjection of all these social groups to the message of the hour of God's judgment (a distinctly Jewish and Christian concept) has the effect also of universalizing John's world view. There is, as John presents it, no other standard which matters among "nations, tribes, languages, and peoples" than the one which guides the Christian minority culture.

how Buchanan's commitment to his theory that John of Patmos is translating and Christianizing a previously extant apocalypse (the recovery of which is the "real" task of interpretation) guides his observations throughout the work. All the more striking is the fact that Buchanan is suggesting that 1QHab 8:1-3 is the most significant text for intertextual study, since this passage in the Habakkuk commentary refers to judgment transpiring "through their work and their faith in the Teacher of Righteousness," a text that shows "loyalty toward" a particular teacher concerning how to keep God's commandments to be very much at home in a Jewish text.

The social codes of honor and patronage are woven together in the first angel's message. As the "one who created heaven and earth and sea and springs of water" (14:7), God is presented as the ultimate benefactor of humankind.³⁸ All living have benefited from God's generosity in creation, and all therefore owe God the debt of gratitude, which should express itself first in revering the patron. The call to "prostrate oneself before" God (προσκυνήσατε) is a call to enact the physical replication of this reverence. Honor is due God also in view of the arrival of "the hour of God's judgment," since this judgment represents God's quest for satisfaction against those who have failed to act graciously toward (i.e., to honor and obey) their Patron. The command to "fear" God (Φοβήθητε τὸν θεόν) also belongs to the social code of honor. Aristotle describes the experience of the emotion of fear as "a painful or troubled feeling caused by the impression of an imminent evil that causes destruction or pain. . . . Such signs are the enmity and anger of those able to injure us in any way . . . and outraged virtue when it has power, for it . . . always desires satisfaction" (*Rh.* 2.5.1, 3, 5). Fearing God is the appropriate response to the proclamation of God's judgment—the arrival of the time for God to gain satisfaction against those who have slighted God. "Fearing" signifies being aware of the greatness of God's honor and the value of God's favor, such that one would do nothing willingly to violate these but rather choose those actions which expressed one's acknowledgment of God's honor and one's debt of gratitude to God for life itself.

The second angel's message announces the fall of Babylon, "who made the nations drink of the wine of the violent passion of her fornication" (14:8). The term "Babylon" brings social intertexture into the passage as a reference to the social institution of the Roman Empire, as this is represented by "Rome," the city at the heart of the empire. This would be a particularly Jewish (and Christian) cultural way of referring to Rome and thus would represent cultural intertexture insofar as the designation would have to be "learned," yet it would also involve social intertexture as it brings the audience in contact with a widely known and ubiquitously experienced social reality.³⁹

38. Mounce (*Revelation*, 271) speaks of this call to honor God as "couched in the language of natural theology," but this does not press far enough into the rhetorical effect or impact of John's language. Sociorhetorical interpretation, with its multi-textured analysis of this description of God, promises to produce a much richer sense of how the text worked on moving its audience at many levels.

39. Several commentators vehemently oppose this identification, but this is usually driven by the commentator's commitment to a particular eschatological scheme within contemporary Christian culture (frequently linked with dispensationalism) which involves a "futurist" reading of Revelation. Robert Thomas (*Revelation 8-22: An Exegetical Commentary* [Chicago: Moody, 1995] 206-7) and Hughes (*Revelation*, 169-70) are representative of this viewpoint. Rejecting the identification of "Babylon" with "some

It is not immediately obvious from this terse declaration, but the expansion of 14:8 in 18:2-24 makes it clear that the social code of honor is again woven into the text. Specifically, 18:2-24 expresses a challenge-riposte exchange between Babylon and God, only the last phase of which (the fall of Babylon—God's riposte) is the subject of 14:8. Babylon has challenged God's honor on several fronts. First, she has challenged God's honor by abusing and killing God's servants: she is "drunk with the blood of the saints and the blood of the witnesses to Jesus" (17:6); in her was found "the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all who have been slaughtered on earth" (18:24). This calls for God's riposte, for God's honor is engaged when his clients and household are attacked (18:20; cf. 6:9-11; 16:5-7). Second, Babylon claimed honor ("she glorified herself," 18:7) beyond what was rightly hers to claim; she spent on herself wealth in proportion to a status which did not belong rightly to her (her "luxury," 18:3, 7). Third, in defiance of God's power to allot kingdoms their periods and their ends (cf. Dan 2:21; 4:26; 5:21), Babylon assures herself and her subjects of her perpetual well-being ("I rule as a queen; I am no widow, and I will never see grief," 18:7). For these affronts to God's honor, her "judgment will come in a single hour" (18:10), the "hour of God's judgment" (14:7).

The third angel's message brings the audience in contact with a social institution—namely, the cult of the Roman emperors (Ἐἵ τις προσκυνεῖ τὸ θηρίον καὶ τὴν εἰκόνα αὐτοῦ, 14:9). Many commentators, who are committed to a complex ideology of inerrancy and dispensationalism,

particular earthly city or empire (such as Rome)," Hughes sees in Babylon "the concentration of all ungodly arrogance and dissoluteness in all the world and throughout the course of history." He supports this claim with the observation that John personifies Babylon as the "whore who has corrupted **all the nations** with her whoredom" (emphasis original). This case relies on a reading of "all the nations" in 14:8 to include not merely "all the nations" contemporaneous with John but "all the nations" which have existed throughout time.

If one begins with the question "what intertext would the first hearers understand to be entering into the passage at this point," or certainly by the end of chap. 18, however, there are several strong indicators that those hearers' imaginations would have turned to the very institution which ruled throughout the Mediterranean, to the city which sits on its famed "seven hills." Thomas (*Revelation* 8-22, 206) will take this as a sign of a renewed Rome, but then one must ask why the first hearers would have need to look beyond their present Rome. The reading, of course, also depends on prior commitment to a certain presupposition, namely, that the meaning of the NT texts is to be guided by the limits imposed upon, and avenues opened up by, that meaning within the context of the first generation of hearers/readers. Mounce (*Revelation*, 271), who also shares (and promotes) the expectations commonly associated with a premillennial interpretation, does not however allow this ideological conviction to override the connections which John and his first audiences would have made with their socio-historical setting.

claim that imperial Rome is too small an empire and the imperial cult too limited a phenomenon to be intended in these verses. The imperial cult to us is indeed a remote, archaic phenomenon. We are not surrounded by it every day. S. R. F. Price, however, has shown how pervasive it was in the seven cities addressed by Revelation, and A. Y. Collins has sensitively portrayed the impact of imperial cult rituals on sensitive Jews and Christians.⁴⁰ If the modern interpreter asks what the first readers of Revelation would have understood to be the "intertext" when the cult of the beast and its image is described, he or she is pointed toward the pervasive phenomenon of the ruler cult and the presence of "images" of the emperor which are at the center of cultic reverence.

Emperor worship was no "sham religion" enforced from above. Rather, participation in this institution, as in the cults of the traditional pantheon, showed one's *pietas* or εὐσεβεία, one's reliability, in effect, to fulfill one's obligations to family, patron, city, province, and empire. Participation showed one's support of the social body, one's desire for doing what was necessary to secure the welfare of the city, and one's commitment to the stability and ongoing life of the city. Moreover, participation was an important expression of gratitude toward those who were perceived to be the city's benefactors.⁴¹ Imperial cult in all parts of the empire focused attention on the emperor as the patron of the world. Since his gifts matched those of the deities (peace, protection from enemies, and the like), it was deemed only fitting that the expressions of gratitude and loyalty should take on the forms used to communicate with the patron deities themselves.⁴² As long as the emperor was strong and his clients faithful, peace and

40. Price, *Rituals and Power*, xxi–xxv, 78–233; Collins (*Crisis and Catharsis*, 101) writes:

For some Christians of the first and second centuries, just as for some Jews, the imperial ruler cult must have been deeply offensive. The polytheism which was joined to it was equally distasteful. The imperial cult was enthusiastically supported in Asia Minor. . . . The public display must have been traumatic for the Christians who opposed its ideology deeply and intensely. The trauma was compounded by the fact that their Gentile neighbors resented Christians' rejections of polytheism and ruler cult. The more enthusiastic their neighbors were about ruler cult, the more precarious the Christians' public status became.

41. On the significance of the imperial cult in Asia Minor and the Mediterranean more broadly, see Price, *Rituals and Power*; Bowersock, "The Imperial Cult"; D. Earl, *The Age of Augustus* (New York: Exeter, 1968) 166–76; Thompson, *The Book of Revelation*, 95–170. These developments are summarized and John's counterpropaganda explored in deSilva, "The 'Image of the Beast' and the Christians in Asia Minor."

42. This principle is well documented in the praise of Demetrius Poliorketes, liberator of Athens (quoted in M. E. Boring et al., *Hellenistic Commentary to the New Testament* [Nashville: Abingdon, 1995] 548): "The other gods must be far distant, or have no ears, or even do not exist, or, if they do, care nothing for us but you we see as living and

prosperity would remain and the horrors of civil war and foreign invasion be prevented. The third angel's message about "worship of the beast and its image," therefore, returns the audience to the social code of reciprocity but subverts it. Imperial cult is not the just expression of gratitude (honor, loyalty) toward one's benefactors but rather a challenge to God's honor which invites God's riposte.

The worshiper of the beast and its image violates God's singular claim on such demonstrations of honor and gratitude. It violates God's determination to "share God's glory" with no other figure (see discussion of oral-scribal intertexture above). In giving such honors to a lesser benefactor—one who has, in fact, set himself against the divine Patron to serve God's enemy (Rev 13:1-8)—the worshiper of the beast provokes God's anger and should expect to suffer God's punishment (ἀπὸς πίεται ἐκ τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ κεκερασμένου ἀκράτου ἐν τῷ ποτηρίῳ τῆς ὀργῆς αὐτοῦ). There was an intimate relationship between anger (wrath) and honor as evidenced, for example, in Aristotle's *Rhetoric* (2.2.1, 8):

Let us then define anger (ὀργή) as a longing . . . for a real or apparent revenge (τιμωρία) for a real or apparent slight (ὀλιγωρία; . . . [People] are angry at slights from those by whom they think they have a right to expect to be well treated; such are those on whom they have conferred or are conferring benefits (εὔπεποίηκεν ἢ ποιεῖ) . . . and all those whom they desire, or did desire, to benefit.

God's wrath in Revelation is the anger of a slighted benefactor, whose favor met not with gratitude but with rejection and affront, here in the form of idolatrous worship.⁴³ In the perpetual punishment of the

present among us, not of wood or of stone, but truly present. Thus we pray: above all, make peace, Most Beloved, for you are Lord (*kyrios*)." Poliorketes provided the deliverance which was the goal of prayers offered to the gods. Nicolaus of Damascus (quoted in Price, *Rituals and Power*, 1) gives a similar picture in his observations of the imperial cult in the Eastern provinces: "all people address him [as Augustus] in accordance with their estimation of his honor, revering him with temples and sacrifices across islands and continents, organized in cities and provinces, matching the greatness of his virtue and repaying his benefactions towards them."

43. Mounce (*Revelation*, 273) distinguishes θυμός from ὀργή by defining the latter term as referring "more to the settled feeling of righteous indignation." The distinction is not demonstrated, however, but only asserted. Harrington (*Revelation*, 150) explains God's anger as "not meaning a feeling or attitude of God toward humankind but an inevitable process of cause and effect: 'wrath' is the effect of human sin." While looking for "cause and effect" with regard to the experience of "anger" is helpful, Harrington has left his discussion at this objectifying, unnatural level without really probing the nature of God's "anger." One of the benefits of reading the classical rhetorical handbooks (like Aristotle's *Art of Rhetoric*) is that the modern reader is introduced to a lengthy discussion of what sort of actions prompted what emotions and to rather precise definitions of what those emotions "felt" like. The modern reader is not left "on his or her own" to try to explain these emotions. Aristotle's definition of anger, moreover,

idolater, God's slighted honor is restored. Aulus Gellius (*Attic Nights* 7.14.2-4) shows that "punishment" is itself closely related to the social code of honor. One term for punishment, τιμωρία, refers to punishment inflicted "when the dignity and prestige of the one who is sinned against must be maintained, lest the omission of punishment bring him into contempt and diminish the esteem in which he is held; and therefore they think that was given a name derived from the preservation of honour (τιμῆ)." The commendation of the "holy ones" who "keep God's commandments and keep faith with Jesus" (οἱ τηροῦντες τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὴν πίστιν Ἰησοῦ, 14:12) also moves within the orbit of patronage/reciprocity codes. The "saints" are those who make a proper return to God for God's benefits: namely, service (keeping God's commands) and loyalty (keeping faith with Jesus).⁴⁴

In sum, social intertexture in Rev 14:6-13 revolves mainly around the social codes of honor and reciprocity (patronage), particularly as these concern participation in the institution of the imperial cult and God's claim to honor. John employs these codes in a way that promotes nonparticipation in cultic display of gratitude to Roman benefactors and upholds the Jewish and Christian cultural value of monolatry.

Historical Intertexture

Rev 14:6-13 does not evoke "historical" events in the usual sense, but it may be fruitful to consider the nature of the "history" it creates. This is a generic feature of apocalypses, which "reveal" the history of cosmogony and eschatology. Rev 14:6-13 creates a history which looks back to God's act of creation itself (14:7) and looks forward to the arrival of God's "hour of judgment" (14:7). The tense of the angel's message is past, but the whole vision reveals what will "shortly come to pass" (1:1; 4:1; 22:6). In the "forthcoming" time, God's hour of judgment will have arrived. In that same period, Babylon will fall and the worshiper of the beast will be subjected to God's punishment (14:8, 9-11). Rev 14:6-13 thus reinforces key "events" in the "history" created by the visions as a whole. These have the nature of

helps the modern reader understand how the ancient audience would have understood God's anger and why it took on the expression that it did—namely, the punishment of idolaters who had "slighted" the One who had "desired to benefit" them. Aristotle provides, moreover, another set of meanings for "righteous indignation," a phrase that proves to be a rather misleading way of conceptualizing God's anger.

44. On the obligations of clients toward mediators and patrons, see D. A. deSilva, "Exchanging Favor for Wrath: Apostasy in Hebrews and Patron-Client Relations," *JBL* 115 (1996) 91-116.

"historical" events, since they are specific events occurring at a specific time (rather than being repeated phenomena, like the imperial cult). They reach, however, outside of "history" proper. John's very choice of genre, however, gives the interpreter an indication of the importance of this "history"—John needs to put his audience's situations (their actual "history") in the context of the "history" articulated within the Christian culture's world view. Only in light of this larger "history" can they make the "correct" choices with regard to participation or nonparticipation in the dominant culture's machines for maintaining its world view (see argumentative texture above).

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL TEXTURE

Specific Social Topics

Rev 14:6-13 nurtures primarily a revolutionist response to the world: it expects that believers will arrive at their goals through divine intervention and the overthrow of the present order. The passage looks forward to the arrival of the hour of God's judgment (ἦλθεν ἡ ὥρα τῆς κρίσεως αὐτοῦ, 14:7) and the collapse of the present world order symbolized by Babylon (Ἔπεσεν ἔπεσεν Βαβυλῶν ἡ μεγάλη). That world order is incurably corrupt and a source of corruption for the world (ἦ ἐκ τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς πεπότικεν πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, 14:8). This end will come through violence but not the violence of members of the Christian culture. Rather, Rome's own subjects, together with divine forces, will bring about the end of her rule (see 16:19-21; 17:15-18). Revolutionist discourse is also present in the description of the punishment of the worshipers of the beast, for it is God who acts decisively to destroy the machinery of imperial ideology and to punish its participants (αὐτὸς πίεται ἐκ τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ . . . καὶ βασανισθήσεται ἐν πυρὶ καὶ θείῳ, 14:10). The revolutionist discourse of Revelation intensifies as not only Rome but the cosmos is renewed by God (chaps. 19-21) and superhuman enemies such as Death, Hades, and Satan are destroyed. The posture of the believer is not to reform the system or construct a better world outside the sphere of Roman power but to "endure" (ἡ ὑπομονὴ τῶν ἁγίων, 14:12), to remain faithful to Jesus and obedient to God's commands until that day of judgment and reversal. The references to "holy ones" (i.e., those who are set apart) and the praise of those who "die in the Lord" do not articulate true introversionist discourse (that is, promoting withdrawal from the company of nonbelievers) but promote a certain ethos for those who "wait" for God's invasion of history. Separation from idolatry and preference for death rather than desertion from God are the result of accepting John's revolutionist discourse.

The passage includes a conversionist note in 14:6, where the first angel is commissioned to proclaim his "eternal gospel" ἐπὶ τοῦς καθήμενους ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἔθνων καὶ φυλῆν καὶ γλωσσῶν καὶ λαόν. The conversionist nature of this verse arises, not merely from the appearance of the universal audience here, but from the repetition of this phrase throughout the work, which creates the impression of a people being assembled for God from out of every nation, tribe, and so forth (see repetitive texture above). John's conversionist discourse is fully embedded in the revolutionist premises. John does not seek to change the world through changing people but rather to draw them into his revolutionist understanding of God's forthcoming intervention and motivate them to respond to this world in keeping with their primary allegiance to the One God and God's Anointed. Moreover, John remains quite fully committed to a deterministic view of history and individual allegiance (see 13:8; 20:15; 22:11).

If gnostic-manipulationist discourse means that "God calls us to change perception,"⁴⁵ Rev 14:6-13 may begin to move into that direction as it proclaims hidden knowledge about the future judgment and the "true" nature of Rome and the imperial cult. Nevertheless, Revelation never truly moves into gnostic-manipulationist discourse since Revelation does not sanction society's objectives, offering a "better" way of achieving them. Its knowledge, moreover, never works *ex opere operatum*, divorced from loyalty toward the One God and the Lamb. John's call to his audiences to "change their perception" of their world, then, still nurtures revolutionist discourse.

The passage may suggest that there is some room for a reformist response to the world in one phrase, τὰ γὰρ ἔργα αὐτῶν ἀκολουθεῖ μετ' αὐτῶν. This will never be a fully reformist response, since John views the social order as essentially demonic (Revelation 12-13) and irredeemable. Nevertheless, there are "works" for the believers to do, "works" that gain approval in the sight of Jesus and God's court, which are distinguished from "works" bringing disapproval (positive or neutral: 2:2, 5, 19, 23; 3:8; 20:12-13; 22:12; negative: 2:6, 22; 3:1, 2, 15; 9:20-21; 16:11; 18:6). While John nurtures no expectation that "works" will change the world for the better, he nevertheless expects that "works" pleasing to God (especially the endurance of whatever remaining loyal requires but also works of love and service toward one's fellow believers) will be performed.

Other modes of social-scientific analysis can be of great assistance to our investigation of the response to the world nurtured by

45. Robbins, *Tapestry*, 151, quoting J. A. Wilde, "The Social World of Mark's Gospel," *SBI, 1978: Seminar Papers* (SBLSP 2; Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1978) 47-67, 50.

Revelation. One especially important resource is sect theory and the analysis of sectarian tension developed by such sociologists as Bryan Wilson, Rodney Stark, William Bainbridge, and Benton Johnson.⁴⁶ Sociologists Stark and Bainbridge have posited that

the church-sect dimension [can be conceptualized] in terms of tension with the surrounding sociocultural environment. This concept is equivalent to broad subcultural deviance marked by: (1) difference from the standards set by the majority or by powerful members of society; (2) antagonism between the sect and society manifested in mutual rejection; and (3) separation in social relations leading to the relative encapsulation of the sect.⁴⁷

Rev 14:6-13 supports John's program of moving the churches toward maintaining a more pronounced sectarian status than his rivals would support. Whereas the element of antagonism is greatly reduced in such texts as Rom 13:1-7 and 1 Pet 2:13-17, Revelation, particularly in relation to imperial ideology, stresses heavily the difference of standards and values, escalates antagonism, and posits a time in the not-too-distant future of mutual rejection (Rev 13:11-18).

Taking into account the work of Bryan Wilson on the factors which influence a sectarian movement either to move towards "denominationalization" (that is, a relative opening-up to the values and social relations of the dominant culture) or to maintain sectarian status, Rev 14:6-13 pushes the churches in Asia Minor in the latter direction. This is especially significant in light of the "denominationalizing" program of "Jezebel" and the "Nicolaitans." Rev 14:9-11 specifically advocates a "withdrawal of the sect from the political arrangements of society," the "refusal to salute national emblems," "the refusal of [the] sect to recognize the legitimacy of society's legal arrangements, and the refusal to accept conventionalized sacred practices."⁴⁸ Rev 14:12-13 helps prepare John's audiences to face the frightful consequences which this escalation of "sectarian tension" will hold for the Christians under Roman rule (as will develop, for example, in Bithynia and Pontus under Pliny the Younger; see Pliny, *Ep.* 10.96-97).

46. See Bryan Wilson, "An Analysis of Sect Development," in *Patterns of Sectarianism* (ed. Bryan Wilson; London: Heinemann, 1967) 22-45; Benton Johnson, "Church and Sect Revisited," *JSSR* 10 (1971) 124-37; Rodney Stark and William S. Bainbridge, "Of Churches, Sects, and Cults: Preliminary Concepts for a Theory of Religious Movements," *JSSR* 18 (1979) 117-33; Bainbridge and Stark, "Sectarian Tension," *Review of Religious Research* 22 (1980) 105-24.

47. *Ibid.*, 122.

48. Wilson, "An Analysis of Sect Development," 25.

Common Social and Cultural Topics

In Rev 14:6-13, John engages the topics⁴⁹ of honor and reciprocity as a means of reorienting his audiences toward the dominant culture (or, if they are already in agreement with John, confirming their orientation). He censures (shames) Rome, and thus the political, religious, and economic arrangements it represents, as a source of vice and degradation for the world (ἐκ τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς πεπότικεν πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, 14:8). He censures the imperial cult as a violation of the primary patron-client bond which should be honored—namely, that bond between every person and the creator God. The hearer who seeks honor, therefore, should seek it by avoiding participation in those allegiances which violate that primary bond. While this will result in being subjected to the dominant culture's negative sanctions of dishonor and censure (even possibly to the point of execution; see 13:11-17; 20:4-6), John claims that lasting honor will be the result of pursuing this course of action (Μακάριοι οἱ νεκροὶ οἱ ἐν κυρίῳ ἀποθνήσκοντες, 14:13).⁵⁰

John also engages, however briefly, the topic of purity in this passage as he uses the term "holy ones" (ἅγιοι, 14:12) to define the members of the Christian groups. This topic is developed at length in other passages (cf. the imagery of soiled versus unspotted garments in 3:4-5; the imagery of pollution used to describe the whore in 17:4-6; 18:2-3), where the rhetorical goal of John is to urge separation from the facets of the audience's social world which he depicts as "unclean." Here the appellation merely serves as a reminder that the believer is called to be "set apart" for God from all uncleanness.

Final Cultural Topics

In Rev 14:6-13, as elsewhere in Revelation, John expresses his concern that God's claim to honor meet with the appropriate response from human beings. His goal throughout Revelation is to move his audiences to regard the course of action which shows God the honor which is God's due as the advantageous and even necessary course of action. This locates Revelation's rhetoric within the context of dis-

49. On honor, reciprocity, and challenge-riposte exchanges in 14:6-13, see "social and cultural intertexture above." One of the challenges of sociorhetorical taxonomy is to discern where social and cultural intertexture stops and social and cultural texture begins—here the practice is to limit social and cultural texture to the way the text orients its readers toward their "real" world, while social and cultural intertexture treats social codes, etc., scripted into the text itself.

50. On the connection between being labeled μακαρίως and being honored, see K. C. Hanson, "How Honorable! How Shameful! A Cultural Analysis of Matthew's Makarisms and Reproaches," *Honor and Shame in the World of the Bible* (Semeia 68; 1996) 81-111.

cussions about the topic of "justice" (δικαιοσύνη) in the Greco-Roman world. Aristotle (*Virtues and Vices* 5.2) had written that "first among the claims of justice are our duties to the gods, . . . and among these claims is piety, which is either a part of justice or a concomitant of it." In the same vein, the author of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* writes,

We shall be using the topics of Justice . . . if we show that it is proper to repay the well-deserving with gratitude; . . . if we urge that faith (*fidem*) ought zealously to be kept; . . . if we contend that alliances and friendships should scrupulously be honored; if we make it clear that the duty imposed by nature towards parents, gods, and the fatherland (*in parentes, deos, patriam*) must be religiously observed; if we maintain that ties of hospitality, clientage,⁵¹ kinship, and relationship by marriage must inviolably be cherished; if we show that neither reward nor favour nor peril nor animosity ought to lead us astray from the right path. (3.3.4)

John's concern for the honor due God shows him to be concerned about the maintenance of a virtue which is central to the dominant culture, the Jewish culture, and the emerging Christian culture. John's location with regard to these various cultures shows itself in the way in which "piety" or "justice" is conceived.

The first angel's message is essentially a call to show God the honor which is God's due. John shares the dominant culture's elevation of piety as a central value but accuses the dominant culture of expressing piety in the wrong ways. He depicts idolatrous expressions of worship (9:20-21; 14:9-11; etc.) as false forms of piety—forms which, indeed, provoke the One God to anger. He would disagree that people are obligated to "the gods," claiming instead that there is a single "maker of heaven and earth" to whom honor is due (14:7). Idolatry and the offering of honor (perhaps the scattering or dissipation of honor) to many gods was an act of injustice, since the One God was not receiving all the honor due God. In John's eyes, therefore, the dominant culture is failing to demonstrate the virtue of justice. John's position is very similar in this regard to Jewish culture, which also tends to articulate a subcultural relationship to the Greco-Roman culture in discussions of piety. With regard to Jewish culture, however, John also positions himself subculturally. In this passage, this emerges in 14:12 as he defines the "holy ones" (a term of positive value in Jewish culture used to describe those who are "giving God God's due" through due observance of the Torah) as those who both "keep the commandments of God" and "keep faith with Jesus." The addition of the second qualification for "holiness" expresses John's conviction that the virtue of piety is fulfilled only by the one who acts justly toward

51. Cf. *Rhet. ad Alex.* 1421b36-40, which also includes honoring of parents, benefiting one's friends, and returning good to one's benefactors as topics of justice.

Jesus ("keeps faith") and maintains the obligations of clientage toward this mediator who has "ransomed" him or her for God (5:9-10).

Topics of justice also include the duties owed to one's "fatherland" and one's benefactors. The discourse of Rev 14:8-11 articulates a countercultural position with regard to Greco-Roman culture on these points. John rejects the public discourse about Rome as the bringer of peace, law, and prosperity and will develop in chaps. 17 and 18 a full counterideology of Rome. Reversing the public discourse about Rome's eternal rule, John declares the termination of Roman power (14:8). The center of empire is not the agent of the gods but the enemy of the One God: its fall will be an act of justice. Similarly, John rejects the public discourse about the emperors as benefactors meriting the honor due the gods in proportion to the magnificence of their favors. In John's discourse, the emperors do not merit gratitude but rather the judgment of God. Those who show the emperors cultic honors, moreover, are not acting "justly" toward benefactors but acting "unjustly" and "impiously" toward the One God.⁵²

The makarism which closes the passage turns to the broader topic of "the honorable" as it names a certain class or type of person "blessed" namely, "those who die in the Lord henceforth" (14:13). Greco-Roman culture certainly knows of the blessed or noble death, but John is referring to people who will die under circumstances the Greco-Roman culture would consider dishonorable. In John's discourse, those who refuse to worship the beast and its image are those who die (13:15 17; 20:4-6). From the perspective of the dominant culture, those who refuse participation in the emperor cult are subversive and ungrateful, thus unjust and dishonorable persons. Through the execution of such persons, the dominant culture will enact its value judgment on their lives: they are worthless and base ("worthy" only of such punishment; cf. Pliny, *Ep.* 10.96 for signs of the estimation of Christians by one voice from the dominant culture). John inverts this public discourse about "the honorable," making the path to greater tension with the dominant culture (even to the ultimate disgrace in their eyes) the path to "blessedness" in God's eyes, as the Spirit testifies.

IDEOLOGICAL TEXTURE

John's Strategy for Promoting His Ideology

John's objectives for Revelation have included undermining the authority of rival prophetic voices, specifically those labeled "Jezebel"

52. This discussion of topics of "justice" already moves under the heading of "the honorable" since the "Right" (namely the "Virtuous," of which "the Just" is a prominent part) is a major subhead under "the honorable" (cf. *Rhet. ad Her.* 3.2.3).

and the "Nicolaitans," and directing all seven churches toward maintaining high boundaries between the Christian culture and Greco-Roman culture. Rev 14:6-13 advanced John's objectives forcibly. First, the announcement that "the hour of God's judgment came" (ἦλθεν ἡ ὥρα τῆς κρίσεως αὐτοῦ, 14:7) reinforces the perception of crisis which John has been explicating from 1:7 ("Look! He is coming with the clouds!") through the seven oracles positing Jesus' visitation for judgment and on through the visions themselves. John holds up readiness to face this "crisis" (τῆς κρίσεως αὐτοῦ) as the principal need which his audiences must address.

John provides a rather straightforward solution to this need: honor the One God entirely and avoid every semblance of idolatry and worship of any god besides the Creator (14:7, 9-11). In stressing the incompatibility of the imperial cult with piety toward the Creator, John is creating an important "differentiation" (see discussion of repetitive texture within and beyond the passage above). He rends asunder what his rivals seek to join together, namely the compatibility of Christian culture with dominant cultural expressions of piety (what John labeled "eating foods sacrificed to idols and committing fornication," 2:14, 20). John portrays worship of the emperor as an act of impiety, an affront against the One God which provokes God's vengeance.⁵³

This effect is enhanced by John's use of labeling. The use of the term "beast" (τὸ θηρίον, 14:9, 11) obscures the humanness and the legitimate claims to gratitude and loyalty which the emperor might make (or which might be made on the emperor's behalf) on the audiences. Labeling "Rome" Βαβυλῶν and Rome's administration and rule as πορνεία (14:8) has a similar effect, replacing public discourse about the character and destiny of Rome with Jewish scriptural discourse about the character and fate of Babylon (see oral-scribal intertexture above)⁵⁴ and replacing any appreciation of connection with Rome as a path to lasting peace, order, and prosperity with a picture of "fornication," a debased and debasing relationship (and a counterfeit relationship as well). It is no accident that John had previously characterized the prophetic ministry of "Jezebel" as teaching the believers to "commit fornication" and condemned "Jezebel" for refusing "to repent of her fornication" (2:20-21). John depicts his

53. Ford (*Revelation*, 249) writes: "There seems to be no middle way; one either adores the beast and is doomed or one accepts with patient endurance the persecution of the beast, obeys the commandments of God, dies in Him, and receives reward for one's good works." This "seems" points precisely to the effect which John hopes to work upon his audiences.

54. Roloff (*Revelation*, 175) recognizes this as he writes that "Babylon is naturally used as a synonym for Rome, not so much to disguise what is truly meant but to reveal its true meaning." He recognizes, at least, that the label allows John to overlay a set of meanings onto "Rome."

rival's ministry as leading believers to enter into the webs of fornication spun by Babylon; painting his rival in the same colors that he paints the godless city which stands under judgment makes a strong attack on her authority and on the appeal of her message.⁵⁵

This is part of John's larger agenda of undermining Roman imperial ideology (focused on the figures of Roma and the emperor) and replacing it with a counterideology which moves the audience to regard these figures quite differently (as "whore" and "beast," pawn of Satan; cf. Revelation 17-18; 12-13 for the full development of this counterideology).⁵⁶ Investigation of ideological texture becomes especially useful and important at this point, since interpreters routinely fall into the trap of reading John's portrait of the situation as a transparent window into that situation rather than a strategically developed and ideologically motivated representation of that situation.⁵⁷ In a sense, the success of John's work is demonstrated every time an interpreter speaks of the intense persecution faced by his audiences or about the extravagant demands made by Domitian and his predecessors for worship or about the rigid enforcement of the imperial cult. Seeing and experiencing one's world this way, however, belongs to John's strategy for moving his audiences to adopt the stance he commends (the visionary nature of Revelation makes it a most eloquent vehicle for conveying a picture of what the world is "really" like).

Using Max Weber's taxonomy of legitimate authority, Rev 14:6-13 continues to promote acceptance of John's authority to define the audience's situation and to prescribe direction for their future on the basis of charismatic legitimation (rather than traditional or functional).⁵⁸ The passage is introduced with "I saw another angel . . . speaking in a loud voice" (εἶδον ἄλλον ἄγγελον . . . λέγων ἐν φωνῇ μεγάλῃ, 14:6-7), and the conclusion to the passage is introduced by another equally explicit reference to the visionary experience: "I heard a voice from heaven saying, 'Write'" (ἤκουσα φωνῆς ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ λεγούσης, Γράψον, 14:13). These lines remind the audiences of the explicated source of the content of this text—namely, God's own self (see 1:1). John continues to embed his "counsel" for the audiences in a "God's-eye view" of their situation and their world. In effect, John

55. Hughes (*Revelation*, 171), choosing not to investigate the ideological texture of Revelation and its contacts with Roman imperial ideology, falls into the trap of reading the references to fornication as symbols of "sexual licentiousness of every kind."

56. For a preliminary investigation of John's "counterpropaganda" as it concerns the representation of the Roman emperor, see deSilva, "Image of the Beast," 185-208.

57. Thompson (*The Book of Revelation*) and Collins (*Crisis and Catharsis*) are excellent examples of scholars breaking through this impasse.

58. For a fine application of Weber's model to Paul's attempts to legitimate his authority in Corinth, see Bengt Holmberg, *Paul and Power* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978).

says nothing or little to his churches: Jesus speaks, angels speak (14:7-11), the Spirit speaks (14:13b), other voices from heaven speak (14:13a), and even God speaks.⁵⁹ John merely relays these messages and presents what God showed him. This is a powerful means by which John promotes the view of the world and the courses of action he seeks to move the audiences to accept. To refuse John's message is to refuse not one itinerant prophet (perhaps in favor of another, like "Jezebel") but to refuse God's own word.

SACRED TEXTURE

God and Other Spirit Beings

In this passage, the hearer/reader encounters God as the creator of the visible world who comes to hold the inhabitants of the earth accountable (the "hour of his judgment," 14:7). God specifically targets the idolater, who gives God's honor to another, refusing God's just claim to exclusive worship, for punishment (14:9-11). The Lamb and the angels are witnesses to the punishment and thus the degradation of these ungrateful clients. Angels also appear in their traditional role of messenger. In one sense, they address their messages to the entire world, thus affirming the impression that all humanity is accountable before the One God; in another sense, they speak only to the communities of the faithful who gather to hear John's Revelation read (1:3). Other heavenly beings speak as well. One of these is unidentified (cf. 10:4, 8; 11:12), which may serve to enhance the mystery of Revelation; the second is the Spirit, who testifies to the truth of what the voice has said, acting thus as the faithful witness to the truth which is a primary role of the Spirit in Johannine discourse (see cultural intertexture above).

The presentation of God as creator and judge is central to the theology of Revelation. As these aspects are developed throughout the book, two important motivations enter into Christian consciousness. First, since God is in fact creator of all things, God is alone worthy of highest honors and complete gratitude. This gratitude would include obedience to God's commands (14:12), including the cardinal prohibition of idolatry. Those who fail in this regard show themselves to be dishonorable clients. Second, God will act in the (imminent)

59. This is still very true, even where the scribal character of apocalypticism is emphasized in conjunction with, or even over, its visionary character. It remains God's word that is spoken in Revelation, since John is presenting in large measure an interpretation and recontextualization of the oracles of God preserved in the Jewish Scriptures. It thus remains "word of God" just as Hebrews, with its interpretation of OT passages, presents the "word of God."

future to affirm his own honor in the punishment of those beings who have opposed or neglected God's commands and in the reward of those who have demonstrated loyalty and trust toward God ("faith") and God's Anointed (thus specifically τῆν πίστιν Ἰησοῦ, 14:12). The assurance of God's judgment is an assurance of God's reliability as the defender of the honor of those who commit themselves to God (see 6:9-11; 16:5-7). John's presentation of God's character and future acts, therefore, undergirds his call for a radical stance of protest against the ideology of the dominant culture.

Human Redemption

Defining "human redemption" as "the transmission of benefit from the divine to humans as a result of events, rituals, or practices,"⁶⁰ we see that 14:13 adds an intriguing aspect to the benefits which come (by radical means) to those who are faithful clients of God. By remaining faithful to God even to point of being killed for their non-participation in idolatrous cults (13:15-17; 20:4-6), believers receive the benefit of entering into "rest from their labors." They pass from conflict to peace, from endurance of hardship to a new and favored state of being. In this state, they will presumably be honored as their "works" are recognized as virtuous before the court of God, the Lamb, and the holy angels. The individual believer's experiences of marginalization (here presented in the extreme), therefore, become vehicles for the experience of divine benefit.

Sacred History

Rev 14:6-13 presents God at work in the creation of "heaven and earth and sea and springs of water" and also in the judging of the inhabitants of God's creation. In effect, the historical intertexture (see above) represents sacred history. The main focus is on the expectation that God will act in the forthcoming future (14:7) to end the domination of Babylon and punish the worshipers of the beast and its image (14:8-11). This expectation serves to strengthen the commitment of those believers who, like John, regard the Greco-Roman world as impious and refrain from participation in its self-legitimizing cults; it also cautions those who would move toward a more accommodating stance toward that dominant culture.

Human Commitment

The response of the human being to the divine as articulated in Rev 14:6-13 should be one of reverent fear, honor, and worship (14:7),

60. Robbins, *Exploring*, 125.

obedience and loyalty (14:12) even unto death (the result of obeying the strict prohibition of worshipping other gods or idols, 14:13). As discussed under "God and other spirit beings" (see above), this commitment is discussed in terms of the obligations of piety and justice toward the divine Benefactor.

Community

Rev 14:6-13 defines Christian community as "holy ones," those who have been "set apart" from others for God. The very term thus carries the potential for supporting high boundaries between the group and other groups or the larger society. This community is further defined as "those keeping God's commandments and faith with Jesus" (οἱ τηροῦντες τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὴν πίστιν Ἰησοῦ, 14:12). This gives the community a distinctive ethos (see the more detailed indications in chaps. 2 and 3 of the ethos God, in the voice of Jesus, requires) over against the larger communities in which the churches gather, particularly as John has depicted this larger community throughout the book (see 9:20-21, for example). The community of the "holy ones" can have nothing to do with the community of "Babylon," for such contacts would only represent "fornication" with the enemy of God. Moreover, this community overlaps with "those who die in the Lord" (14:13). It is a community which, if it accepts John's vision of reality and prescriptions for responding, will move into greater areas of tension with the host society and experience its antagonism and rejection.

Ethics

John teaches his audiences to regard participation in the imperial cult and any sense of partnership with Rome as unethical, specifically as breaches of the patron-client relationship formed between the human being and the One God. Living with complete care for God's honor ("fearing God") demands nonparticipation in the cultic expressions of the dominant cultural ideology. This will take the believer into dangerous territory, and so one virtue which John specifically commends is "endurance" (ὑπομονή, 14:12). John uses athletic and military metaphors throughout Revelation as a means of portraying the path which brings the believer into conflict with the dominant culture as a contest or battle in which one must only "endure" (thus embodying an aspect of the virtue of courage) in order to "overcome" (see 15:2). Revelation calls Christians living in any society to analyze their surroundings *sub specie Dei*, from the perspective of God's standards and God's desires for all members of the human family. Where a society makes claims for itself that conflict with the lordship of

Christ, or where it promotes the lifestyle of a few at the expense of others, Christians are called to bear witness to the falseness of that society's ideology and to expose its opposition to God's vision for human community and human worship. It is also God's own justice—God's commitment to God's clients—that enables this posture of witness in the face of potential hostility.

SYNTHESIS: THE MEANING-EFFECT AND
STRATEGY OF REVELATION 14:6-13

Rev 14:6-13 achieves its effect largely through appealing to topics of justice and drawing out the consequences of injustice from distinctly subcultural and countercultural perspectives. It creates a crisis concerning how one is to maintain the "just" response to one's patrons precisely by positing enmity between God and emperor (and between God and Rome). As John invites the audiences into the reality of the world his visions create, they are led to "see" that the just or honorable person cannot render cultic honors to God and to the emperor at the same time. John establishes an incompatibility where rival voices have preached compatibility.

*Revelation 14:6-7: Universal Call for
Just Response to the Divine Patron*

The first angel summons "every nation and tribe and language and people" to give God the honor which is God's due. As creator of "heaven and earth and sea and springs of water," God is the patron of all humankind, which is called to give God its reciprocal obligation of gratitude (which includes honor, loyalty, and service). The author's choice of the words "fear" and "worship" and his decision to identify the one worthy of worship as "maker of heaven and earth" evoke strong overtones through their resonances with Jewish sacred texts (oral-scribal and cultural intertexture). God is here identified in a way frequently used in Jewish Scriptures to set God apart from the gods of the nations, the "no-gods" who stand at the center of idolatrous cults, and to stress God's authority over all the kingdoms of the earth God has created. "Worship" frequently occurs in proscriptions of idolatry, and to "fear" God is to keep God's commandments (cf. 14:12), the first of which is to avoid provoking God through worship of other gods or through setting up idols. John reminds his audiences here of God's prior and priority claim to honor and of the obligation to show God honor through obedience to God's principal command—namely, the prohibition of sharing God's honor with another.

The summons to give the Divine Patron his due—to pursue an honorable (because just) course—is reinforced by the angel's announcement of "the hour of God's judgment." This bolsters the sense of crisis which John has been developing since 1:7 and will continue to develop through chap. 22, as John attempts to focus the audiences on God's future and forthcoming visitation to hold all the inhabitants of the earth responsible for their failures to act justly toward God and God's loyal clients.

Revelation 14:8: Summary Refutation of Ideology of Rome

The second angel declares that "Babylon the great" fell, identifying this figure as "she who made all the nations drink of the wine of the violent passion of her fornication." This verse announces what shall become the central topic from 16:18 through 19:4. Giving Rome the label "Babylon" is an important component of John's deconstruction of Roman imperial ideology and his replacement of that ideology with the alternative he constructs more fully in chaps. 17-18. It opens up the possibility of using the rich resources of Isaiah and Jeremiah, both of whom were considered inspired and completely reliable prophetic voices among Jews and early Christians, since they were part of the sacred scriptural tradition. John is able to harness their authority as he recontextualizes their prophetic denunciations of Babylon and their forecasts of her destruction, now applying them to the heart of the Roman Empire. John begins to unveil the goddess Roma for what she is in John's estimation--a harlot whose primary activity is the seduction of the nations of the earth away from the One God. Describing the wine she offers as "her fornication," John is able to associate Jezebel the prophetess, previously censured for not ceasing from "her fornication" and for teaching fornication, with this figure of Babylon who is already condemned before God and ready to fall. Later, in chaps. 17-18, John will explain that the fall of Rome is the result of God's riposte to her challenge (her arrogant disregard for God's authority over earthly kingdoms, her hostility specifically toward God's faithful clients, her insolent disregard for the honor of all people).

The audiences are led to see alliance with Rome as, ultimately, disadvantageous for two reasons. Rome is dishonorable, leading her partners into activities which are censurable before God's court, and Rome is destined for destruction (quite the opposite of the "public discourse" about Rome!). Partnership with Rome offers neither honor nor security but, rather, their opposites. This impression is reinforced by the connection between the "wine of the violent passion" of Babylon (14:8) and of God (14:10).

Revelation 14:9-12: God's Riposte to the Idolater's Challenge

The third angel's message explicates the incompatibility of honoring the One God and engaging in the cultic display of honor toward the emperor which was so prominent a part of civic life in Asia Minor. While 13:15-17 announced the penalties faced by those who refused to worship the beast and its image, this passage declares that those who do consent to worship the beast and its image will face much greater punishment. Daniel 3, which also posed the dilemma of worshipping an image or remaining faithful to the One God at great personal risk, is an important conversation partner for John as he writes chaps. 13-14. The third angel's message is a reconfiguration of the decree of Nebuchadnezzar (and, of course, a response to Rev 13:15-17), declaring that the idolater will face unending torment in fire and sulfur (rather than the "lesser" punishment of execution).

John's use of the label "beast" enables him to obscure any humaneness or beneficence which might attach to the emperor. He is seen by John and shown by John to be a pawn of God's archenemy (Revelation 12-13) and exemplifies the antipatron. The imperial cult is thus transformed from the offering of honors to a patron whose gifts matched those of the gods into the offering of grave affront to the One God who proscribed idolatry and worship of any other god. What the dominant culture defines as just and pious, John redefines as unjust and impious. The third angel, therefore, announces the riposte that God will give for the challenge to God's honor (in the giving away of the honors due God to God's enemies, the dragon and the beast). God will confirm his challenged honor through the degradation of his enemies' clients (through assaults on their bodies and through public humiliation).

John's audiences are led to choose a course of nonparticipation and nonassimilation by these announcements. Particularly the third message urges that, while it may lead to temporary honor and security (as Jezebel and the Nicolaitans would aver), participation in idolatrous cults leads to eternal disadvantage (dishonor and danger) and should be avoided at all costs. After this frightful picture of God's "anger" acting to restore God's honor, John includes a statement which reaffirms the core values of Christians as those who are "set apart" for God (thus affirming a sectarian posture toward the host society) and who are committed to preserving a just response to God, their Patron, and to Jesus, their mediator. They "keep" the commands of the former (obedient service) and "keep faith with" the latter (loyalty).

Revelation 14:13: Redefining the Noble Death

Unlike his model in Daniel 3, John presents it as certain that choosing to obey God's prohibition of idolatry will have inescapable con-

sequences for the faithful. There is no hint in Revelation that God will save the believers from their respective furnaces but, rather, the expectation that they will indeed die and complete the number of the witnesses (6:9-11). John prepares his audiences, however, to understand such a death as a vehicle for receiving divine benefits. The "dead who die in the Lord" are "blessed," indicating that they enjoy an honored status and enjoy God's favor. Juxtaposed with the message of the third angel, the audience may understand this blessedness as residing first in escape from the degradation and pain which awaits the clients of God who fail to honor God as God merits. The faithful will "rest," while the idolaters will "not have rest day or night" (14:11).

This makarism essentially redefines the ultimate experience of disapproval and censure at the hands of society (namely, eradication) as in "reality" the experience of entering into eternal honor before God. Society's attempts to reform the deviant become, in John's hands, the occasion for the one who "endures" (14:12) to win honor where that honor will be preserved forever, where his or her "works" of obedience to God and loyalty to Jesus and fellow-believers will become the cause of renown. What the dominant culture would intend as a dishonorable death, John depicts the voice from heaven and the Spirit, the reliable witness, affirming as a noble death. At this point, however, the reader should remember that the dominant culture has not yet been engaged in the systematic execution of Christians. John's discussions of martyrdom, therefore, will prepare the believers for that possibility but also serve John's ideological agenda, namely, painting the relationship between church and society as one under great tension. He guides his audiences to "see" the outside world in such a way that the partnership with it (or merely external acts making for peaceful coexistence) urged by John's rivals becomes unthinkable.