REIGN WITH HIM FOR THOUSAND YEARS (REV 20:6)

A socio-hermeneutical Exposition of biblical and contemporary millenarian Movements in Zimbabwe as radical Responses to Deprivation

David Bishau

Bible in Africa Studies

Études sur la Bible en Afrique
Bibel-in-Afrika-Studien

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edited
by

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in
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with
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and
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> "I do not know of any positive association with bias in English but I think it is ironical and I would suggest we keep it. My reasons are simple, first; there is indeed a lot of bias in the manner the Bible has been used in Africa, and Europe etc. BiAS would be an interesting series title for us. Second, the series is taking a deliberate decision to focus more on the Bible in Africa, which essentially is a bias also. I therefore think this title should clearly explain the core of what we are going to do, and maybe at the end of the series people will realise bias is not always bad." *(M. R. Gunda)*

With this series of essays collections and monographs on Bible in Africa and Africa related Biblical Studies we want to open up a forum of academic exchange on an international level. This exchange is usually not quite easy, especially between scholars in Africa and in the West. The reasons are lack of library sources on one side, lack of interest on the other. Presenting a book series which is published in Germany but available all over the world via internet we hope to improve communication a bit. We invite all Biblical scholars dealing with Africa related topics to bring their best studies into the BiAS series. Online publication is without any costs; only printed exemplars need to be funded.

Joachim Kügler – Lovemore Togarasei – Masiiwa R. Gunda

Epigraph

The past is the backbone of the present and the mind of the future. The present and future are thus necessary mutations of the past. Therefore, my main characters in this thesis, the millenarian who feed and thrive on the past, will certainly live on.

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Acknowledgements

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Many thanks go to my former student, colleague and friend, Masiiwa Ragies Gunda for encouraging me to publish this thesis as a book. Heart felt thanks also go to Prof. Joachim Kügler, Dr. Lovemore Togarasei and Gunda, the editors for proof reading the final draft and accepting to publish this work as an unedited thesis. Their contribution to Biblical studies in Africa is to be emulated. I am therefore extremely encouraged by their work and hope more biblical works by African scholars will similarly benefit from this window of opportunity.

M. Tsengerayi and C. Chairuka spent sleepless nights typing the manuscript and their work need to be acknowledged. The work took some years and throughout these years I was on Pastoral appointment. I would like to thank members of King David United Methodist Church and Hilltop United Methodist Church for being patient with me during the research. The final draft of the work was concluded while I was appointed to Fern Valley United Methodist Church and many thanks go to members of this congregation for their moral support. Some of the members deserve to be mentioned, Mr. and Mrs. A. Chaguma and Mr. and Mrs. T Mawoyo, who volunteered their

Preface

This work is meant to be a continuation of an earlier investigation into the apocalyptic thought pattern of one of the major figures in the New Testament, Paul. The present study investigates further the subject of Apocalypticism with a slightly different motivation and orientation. It carries a study of Apocalypticism further by investigating the broader phenomenon of millenarianism drawing case studies from biblical and contemporary millenarian movements in Zimbabwe namely the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Johane Masowe respectively as radical responses to deprivation.

As such, I take cognizance of the increase in the complexity of the subject matter and therefore, the caution I must exercise first, in my selection of the methodology to use and second, in the logical development of each step in my argumentation till I reach the final conclusion right at the end of the study. For instance, I have endeavoured to the utmost of my ability to integrate results from biblical exegesis and field research even though the balance was difficult to maintain. A lot of focus was on the results from biblical exegesis since the primary aim was to arrive at a conceptual metaphor which I then used to make sense out of the contemporary millenarian movements in Zimbabwe. It is not surprising that the sections on the latter movements are shorter comparatively than those dealing with biblical millenarian movements.

While indeed I take on leading scholars on the subject, I must acknowledge that my selection is not exhaustive, neither is it always thorough. Besides, the views of the

scholars I select for analysis may not be their latest positions on the subject matter. Some of the views were known to me only through the spectacles of other scholars, while others are yet to be published. Because of the latter it is inevitable that my list of references necessarily includes unpublished works.

Indeed the journey is long, from the Old Testament to the New and from the New Testament to contemporary millenarian movements in Zimbabwe. The reader is taken through many "twists and turns" in my narrative and is certainly bound to experience seeming lacunae. Where there are gaps there is every effort to state this but what is more helpful to the reader, there are efforts to offer a brief discussion of the circumstances and possible factors that led to the creation of such gaps and how I propose to bridge each gap. Last, I have tried to provide a wealth of ideas from diverse areas but still endeavouring to process the material coherently for both the specialized and ordinary reader.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The Area of Investigation

Scope of Study and link with previous Works

Both my B.A Honours and M.A theses were preoccupied with the subject of apocalypticism, but specifically focusing on Paul. Our basic rationale for beginning our studies with Paul was that, any meaningful study of the New Testament has to begin with the earliest New Testament literary evidence and that is, Paul. The present thesis aims to broaden our horizons on the subject of apocalypticism by investigating the phenomenon of millenarianism. In particular, we seek to study selected biblical and modern millenarian movements as radical responses to deprivation.

The Problem under Investigation

A number of scholars have studied the subject of millenarianism particularly focusing on what they are doing to effect social change and what it is that makes the movements survive especially in the face of the destruction of their respective focal figures. Prominent scholars in this debate include L. Festinger, J.G. Gager, H. Jackson, U. Wernik, R.P. Carroll and B.J. Malina, to mention a few. Festinger proposed the theory of Cognitive Dissonance to explain the survival of the movements and a number of scholars have long since followed him in this, the most prominent among Festinger's followers being Gager. Several scholars have found Festinger's model of Cognitive Dissonance difficult to validate and have come up with alternative explanations. One major alternative model is

the model of Normative Inconsistency that develops into various other versions, for example, the Inconsistency and Cultural Matrix, and Dissonance and Ambivalence models respectively.

The problem with this debate on the factors influencing the survival of millenarian movements is that the debate seems to begin midway. Scholars in this debate perhaps assume that the results of the debate on the origins of the movements are known and well concluded. Further, the views of the scholars on the survival of the movements are divorced from the debate on their origins with the result that their theories on the survival of the movements become inadequate. Therefore, in this dissertation we investigate the context within which the millenarian movements originate and from this investigation go a step further to suggest our alternative model concerning the factors influencing the survival of the movements.

Aim and Objectives

Therefore, the aim of this dissertation is to investigate both the questions whether or not the millenarian movements under study originated within the context of deprivation and what makes them survive in the face of the ensuing suffering or deprivation. We seek to achieve our aim by pursuing the objectives we discuss hereunder. Our objectives are:

(a) To trace the origins of millenarianism from the genesis of Israelite prophecy.
(b) To trace the development of millenarianism through an investigation of relevant excerpts from Old Testa-

ment prophetic literature namely Deutero-Isaiah, Ezekiel, Micah and Zechariah in a bid to arrive at how the millenarian movements behind the books originated and examine what it is that helped them to survive.

(c) To investigate the circumstances that influenced the writing of the book of Daniel and consequently the origin and growth of the millenarian movement behind the book; ancillary to this we investigate, though briefly the historical origins of the Qumran community to see whether or not deprivation was the context within which these movements originated.

(d) To investigate the circumstances that prompted the writing of the book of Revelation and therefore, the context within which the millenarian movement behind it came into being.

(e) Last, to investigate two selected millenarian movements in Zimbabwe, the Johane Masowe and the Jehovah's witnesses in a bid to examine whether the two movements originated as responses to deprivation.

Justification

(a) Our rationale for pursuing this topic is three-tier thus:

(b) The study can be seen as a significant contribution to studies of the subject in Biblical Studies in Africa;

(c) The subject has political implications which prescribe the urgency to look at it from a fresh perspective;

(d) Strictly related to (b) above, millenarian movements may have negative impact on society and therefore, the study may be a source of information that serves as a basis for remedial action.

The Study as a Contribution to Studies of Millenarian Movements in Biblical Studies in Africa

The fact that the phenomenon of millenarianism has been discussed widely in the numerous disciplines stated above may, if we proceed without caution, lead us into committing a fallacy of division. While on the whole the phenomenon has enjoyed quite a wide platform of debate in other disciplines, especially Sociology and while elsewhere outside Africa material on it is quite abundant;

(a) In Biblical studies not a great deal of attention has been paid to it. As we argue later, probably, this is due to the traditional and, or, stereotyped characterization of millenarianism. In Biblical studies millenarianism has often been dismissed as a "primitive and obsolete" thought structure that "indulges in speculations about the end of the world" and is preoccupied with a "literalistic understanding of fanciful images and bizarre visions".[1] Basically, the movements themselves have been perceived as celestial escapist movements that are primarily world negating. The question is, analytically is this what they really are? We do not seek to answer this crucial question now but what we need to state at this juncture is that, this traditional characterization of the phenomenon appears to have killed interest on the subject among biblical studies scholars. Therefore, as D. Martin puts it, in its full-blown scale, millenarianism remains, by and large, *terra incog-*

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[1]   J. C. Beker, *Paul's Apocalyptic Gospel: The Coming Triumph of God.* Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982. p. 11.

nita even to the otherwise well-informed biblical scholars of our time.[2]

(b) In Africa, material on the phenomenon of Millenarianism, the movements themselves and their activities, is quite scarce. Ironically, this scarcity of material on the subject does not tally with the growing challenges and threats millenarian movements appear to pose on theologians, church and political leaders, as well as society in general in Africa.

Therefore, this thesis is challenging and ground breaking in a two-fold manner. It seeks to initiate debate and make alternative contributions on the subject first, within Biblical studies and second, within studies of the movements in Africa.

The Political Implications of the Movements and the Urgency to Study them from a Fresh Perspective

Second, but strictly related to the above, an analysis of the doctrines or ideologies of the movements shows that they may have a political agenda and this prescribes the urgency to study them from a fresh perspective. How far accurate is the assertion that the movements are world negating? In essence, are the movements' escapist, politically innocent and ineffectual movements? Can we adequately explain their nature and activities from the perspective of escapism?

From an impromptu analysis, the movements indeed appear to be celestial escapist movements. When we see

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[2] D. Martin, *Tongues, Of Fire The Explosion Of Protestantism In Latin America*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1990. p. 1.

them say, refuse to honour national flags, or, join the army, precisely this is what they appear to be: movements that are not concerned with things of this world. However, an analysis of their doctrines or ideologies may prove otherwise.

For example, in one of their magazines the Jehovah's Witnesses claim that:

> The purpose of the Watchtower is to exalt Jehovah God as sovereign Lord of the Universe. It keeps watch on World Events as these fulfil Bible prophecy. It comforts all peoples with the good News that God's Kingdom will soon destroy those who oppress their fellowmen and that it will turn the earth into a paradise. It encourages faith in God's now-reigning King, Jesus Christ, whose shed blood opens the way for mankind to gain eternal life. The Watchtower, published by the Jehovah's Witnesses continuously since 1879, is non-political. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.[3]

When the witnesses say they are "watching" world events and the Kingdom of God will "soon destroy those who oppress fellowmen and ... will turn the earth into a paradise", are they a celestial apolitical movement? Also, when they teach that heaven is already full with 144 000 people (c.f. Revelation 7) and so the rest will inherit the earth, are they not terrestrial? So, when they refuse to join the army, is it because they are not concerned with things of this world or is this not an absolute political refusal to assist or join arms with parties who they perceive as enemies? Analytically, what are they saying and doing? Axiomatically, how are we to account for the seemingly world negating attitudes within these movements?

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[3]   The Watchtower Vol. 115 No. 14 July 15, 1994 p. 2.

In this study we argue that escapism is not the issue that can account for these attitudes but deprivation. If it can be demonstrated that there is a link between the emergence of millenarianism and deprivation then the proliferation of these movements would serve as a warning that there are some ills in society, which need to be addressed, and this speaks for the importance of the study. The study seeks to investigate that link between millenarianism and deprivation and should the presence of the link be demonstrated, therefore, prescribe the urgency to study the movements from a fresh perspective that seriously raises questions about the traditional and, or, stereotyped characterization of the movements.

Recently, in Zimbabwe, the Jehovah's Witnesses came under fire from some officials within the ruling party, ZANU (PF). One official noted that the movement was frustrating government efforts at voter registration.[4] Another official argued that the movement now had a reputation of preaching an "anti-politics gospel" which in fact was a clear demonstration of a negative attitude towards government developmental plans.[5] Thus, there is an alleged link between the movement on one hand, and voter apathy and lack of participation in government developmental plans, on the other.

A Comment on the Events

From this several searching questions can be asked, questions which prescribe the urgency to study the move-

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[4] *The Daily Gazette*, Monday, May 16, 1994. p. 4.
[5] *Ibid.*

ments from a fresh perspective: are millenarian movements politically innocent, ineffectual movements? Fundamentally who are the millenarian devotees? As they use the Bible what have they tried and are trying to do in society? Are they manipulationists, revolutionists, introversionists or conversionists?

It is our submission in this study that these questions and the terms above form important criteria to:

(a)   assess the impact of these movements in either effecting or in stagnating change in society, and

(b)   develop a basis for remedial action.

The latter is the third aspect of our three-fold rationale for pursuing the topic.

The Study as a Source of Information that Serves as a Basis for Remedial Action

Having discussed the events above, it becomes apparent that a number of figures who include political leaders, church leaders, theologians and, or, academics may often be besieged with requests for information regarding the phenomenon of millenarianism and in the case of the former two figures, asked to take action regarding the phenomenon. Lack of adequate information can lead either to no action at all or overreaction.

As we demonstrate later, part of the thesis of this study is that in as much as the movements have developed external structures to respond to various stimuli of deprivation in society, they have also developed internal structures for the same purpose. The latter comprise the doctrines, faiths and, or, ideologies of the movements. Previous studies have concentrated on the external structures

and have failed to take cognisance of the fact that the external structures develop from within, are continuous with, and their function is determined by, internal structures. Thus, their analysis of the impact of the movements on society has been inadequate.

Therefore, this study seeks to break new ground and is significant in so far as it endeavours to expose the internal logic of the doctrines, faiths or ideologies of the movements in a bid to:

a)   Provide tools for church leaders, theologians and, or academics in Africa to assess the negative impact of the movements in society where and when this becomes evident,

b)   Provide useful and adequate information that provides basic criteria for choice of remedial action. Crucial here is the question whether or not the movements should be judged incapable of evolution in a positive sense.

So, the goal of this dissertation is its justification. The dissertation is an academic endeavour not to offer concrete proposals of remedial action but adequate information about millenarian movements, which serves as a possible basis for remedial action.

It is in this sense that the research is primarily significant. It is different from most previous studies that are based on the euro-centric objectivity where research is an end in itself, in which case therefore, its practical results are non-existent. Here we take a more pragmatic approach to knowledge guided by the principle that, Africa, Zimbabwe in particular with its limited resources, cannot afford research for its own sake.

Literature Review
Preliminary Remarks

Before we proceed to actually review what others have said and done, or, are saying and doing about the same subject, we need to put in place certain crucial preliminary remarks. To begin with the term "Literature Review" may be limited in terms of the spectrum of the ideas covered under this section in that it creates the impression that we are dealing with what is written only. This way, the term appears to be inadequate for our purposes because of the considerations which we discuss below.

First, the movements under study are not the same now as they were in the past when articles and, or, books about them were written. For example as we discuss later in the relevant chapter, both the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Johane Masowe have changed structurally. The Jehovah's Witnesses have taken certain measures to dissociate themselves with the figures and various groups of Witnesses that sprang up in Africa following certain `disturbing political happenings we spell out later. Thus, part of their history that we are interested in is either concealed or distorted. The Johane Masowe is no longer a unified group in terms of their operations and to a certain extent their beliefs are not uniform any more even though the various groupings boast of common historical origins.

This however, should not create problems of analysis for us since, as we argue later, it is possible to develop useful typologies, models and, or, conceptual metaphors which cut across cultural forms and time periods. These typologies can facilitate meaningful comparison and analysis of the movements. Otherwise, our point at this

juncture is that what we have in the written literature may no longer be an accurate rendering of what there is in terms of the distinct features of the movements in question. Therefore, we adopt an approach to the review that is broad-based in a bid to make our options open to include existing knowledge about the movements which has been gathered through oral tradition, participatory observation of certain rites and other sources of knowledge to this effect.

This point becomes particularly significant when we consider the Johane Masowe. Unlike the Jehovah's Witnesses who, in their own right, are a writing community, the Johane Masowe have, for a long time, belonged to the world of people who neither write nor read many books, often because the majority have been illiterate and are rarely understood even when they express themselves. Thus, while a substantial amount of knowledge has been written about them, this knowledge is largely from observers and is therefore secondary. Thus, the Akan proverb;

"*Tete ka ene kakyere*",

(Ancient things remain in the ear).[6]

becomes largely true of the Johane Masowe in that what they perceive of their past and themselves remains "in the ear" (i.e. oral).

Yet our point of departure and hence thesis, cannot be complete without the Johane Masowe's articulation of what they perceive of themselves. Indeed, we are inter-

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[6]   J. Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History*. London: James Currey Ltd., 1985. p. xi.

ested in this record, which J. Vansina terms "a living tradition"[7] because our thesis is enhanced and enriched by it. This is particularly important when we analyse the Chitungwiza group's concept of the Bible, which M. Engelke describes as "Live and direct"[8]

This is strictly related to our second point regarding this first preliminary remark. We adopt a broad-based approach to the literature review because of how we develop our point of departure. The purpose of the literature review is to enable us to:

(a) carve our own niche within the whole labyrinth of ideas on the subject and,

(b) establish our own point of departure and hence thesis.

Yet, as we argued above, our own point of departure does not stem out of written knowledge alone, but the whole gamut of existing knowledge, which includes, or, draws from, oral tradition.

So, while we review as far as possible representative samples of secondary sources on the subject and the movements in question, we also take cognisance of, and indeed utilize, opportunities that do exist for access to primary documents (e.g. archives) and field research with all its dimensions. A great deal of our perception of oral tradition and how oral knowledge was collected is dealt with under Methodology.

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[7]   *Ibid.,* p. 33.

[8]   M. Engelke, "Text and Performance in an African Church: The Book, 'Live and Direct,' " in *American Anthropologist, vol. 31, No.1.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004. p. 77.

The Paucity of Sources and the Lacunae Assumed By the Study

We have already argued earlier that while the subject of millenarianism has enjoyed a wide platform of debate in other disciplines and elsewhere other than Africa, in Biblical studies and in Africa in particular, not a great deal of attention has been paid to it. So, owing to the paucity of sources dealing with the subject and specifically in the same manner as we are treating it here, we are compelled to consult many sources from diverse contexts, which deal with the same subject or similar phenomena. This way we may be able to bridge the lacunae that the study may assume.

For this reason too, it is appropriate to group scholars into schools of thought. However, we do proceed with caution, as we attempt to avoid committing the fallacy of division. We are aware that what is true of the whole is not necessarily true of the parts. That a school of thought generally develops towards the same position should not necessarily make us conclude that the individual scholars forming the school always agree in the fine details of their arguments. Grouping scholars into schools of thought is done in an attempt to reduce the gaps that may be created due to consultation of various pieces of literature from different contexts, and hence provide a logical link to the general flow of the argumentation of the dissertation. However, we highlighted at relevant points in the review peculiarities of individual scholars, especially those that are of particularly significance to us.

We avoid reviewing intensively the literature that forms large portions of later chapters to avoid unnecessary mo-

notony. Also, our review may not necessarily follow chronology but a sequence that brings a logical link to the kinds of ideas we are raising unless history is part of the models and conceptual metaphors we are developing to penetrate the phenomenon of millenarianism, in which case chronology becomes pertinent.

Literature dealing with Religious Enthusiasm and Millenarianism in General

Reviewing these pieces of literature is not a deviation from the task of the study, nor is it a deliberate attempt at false scent; rather, findings from the literature are significant in that they provide significant building blocks to our paradigm and conceptual metaphor of millenarianism. Although other pieces of literature are helpful in this regard, I. M. Lewis provides the initial block that is crucial to the whole process of crafting our thesis. Our interest is in his work *Ecstatic Religion* (1981) and for this reason we review it first.

I. M. Lewis

Lewis agrees with many who consider themselves religious that the corner stones of religion are basically three, namely: Belief, Ritual and Spiritual experience, or what other scholars refer to as spirituality.[9] Lewis observes that contrary to what most social anthropologists, especially British anthropologists, say, some scholars have often been maintained that the latter is, or should be considered

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[9]   I. M. Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*. Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1971. p. 2.

as, the greatest of the three.[10] However, most modern social anthropologists emphasize the former two aspects of religion as more important and central, and in fact shun any effort at studying religious enthusiasm or emotion; a task that they abandon to both the psychiatrist and theologian.[11] Inevitably, the anthropologists have devoted themselves to amassing, in as minute and exact detail as possible, data on varieties of religious rites and beliefs of a host of people from various parts of the world. These data, so the anthropologists claim, are based on participant observation and inquiry among actual devotees of the religions in question.[12]

We are neither interested in the development of the fine details of Lewis' argument, nor do we follow him in every detail. Rather, we focus on the significance and implications of the major thesis of his book and how he goes about achieving it, to how we establish our point of departure and thesis.

Lewis argues, and we agree, that emphasis on beliefs and rituals that excludes an analysis of the spiritual experiences of the believers is problematic.[13] It lays exclusive emphasis on the unique cultural forms of particular religious institutions at the expense of, if not ignoring totally, the significance of the form, first, to the devotees and second, to the societies in which the devotees live. Therefore, for Lewis, the comparative study of religion by

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10   *Ibid.*
11   *Ibid.*
12   *Ibid.,* p. 12
13   *Ibid.*

the social anthropologists lacks one essential precondition for effective analysis and that is the crucial importance of distinguishing between the unique cultural forms of particular institutions and their actual social significance.[14] The importance of such a distinction is that it allows us to infer that while institutions differ in their cultural forms, they may achieve or fulfil the same social functions. Thus, we agree with Lewis that useful typologies that cut across cultural forms and which facilitate meaningful comparison may be developed to analyse the social effects of the institutions.[15]

Because of the significance of his point for our study, Lewis' point has to be magnified and clarified. We agree that beliefs, rituals and the spirituality of the devotees form the cornerstones of religion. However, we mark a point of departure form him and the rest of the other scholars in that first, we do not find it possible to separate beliefs from the spiritual experience of the devotees. Second, we contend that the beliefs and the spirituality of the devotees form the internal logic of the religious movement and it is this internal logic that determines the external form or the morphology of the movement. Thus, structurally or morphologically and in terms of ritual practice religious movements may differ, but if they share common elements within their internal logic then they may respond to external stimuli in pretty much the same way.

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[14]   *Ibid.*
[15]   *Ibid.*

Part of our thesis is that millenarian movements, especially the ones under study, may have a common internal logic and hence a common reaction to social stimuli, which in our case is relative deprivation. Therefore, Lewis is right that useful typologies that cut across cultural forms can be developed first, to facilitate meaningful comparison and second, to analyse the social effects of the different institutions.

This point is our rationale for analysing the movements under study together, even though morphologically and in terms of ritual practice they may be different and although each movement may have undergone metamorphosis due to time and change in social setting. Therefore, contrary to most social anthropologists mentioned above we refrain from both focusing on what Lewis refers to as unique cultural forms of the movements and relegating to peripheral importance the spirituality, or what in our vocabulary is the faith, of the millenarian, especially, its social significance. Rather, as we develop our chapters we demonstrate that the millenarian movements develop from past prophetic traditions a basic millenarian ideology, which they use to deal with various kinds of deprivation that they are currently facing. Therefore, a core component of our thesis that comes out of Lewis' work is argument that it is crucial when studying the movements to pay particular attention to their doctrines or millenarian ideology. The other key building blocks come from N. Cohn and E.J. Hobsbawn.

N. Cohn and E. J. Hobsbawn

N. Cohn studied the history of millenarian movements in Medieval and Reformation Europe focusing mainly on France and Germany, while, E. J. Hobsbawn analysed millenarian movements in Spain and Italy, comparing the movements to labour sects during the 19th and 20th centuries. Although these two scholars do have their major differences, we place them together as constituting a school of thought mainly because of a common approach to millenarian movements, in which case therefore; they probably raise the same questions about the movements. Both aim to describe and analyse unique sequences of events but as Talmon puts it, they also aim to detect the recurrent regularities of events.[16]

Basically, the two scholars recognize that each group of related items, though it may last only for a short time, has its own irreducible particularity and distinctiveness.[17] Hence, elements, which once produced some historical situation, reappear in different sequence and proportion and yet the basic pattern is produced.[18] This point is the two scholars' rationale for adopting a comparative approach to millenarian movements.

We are particularly interested in this approach especially when we consider the fact that the millenarian movements in the Bible have this peculiarity. We demon-

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[16] Y. Talmon, "Pursuit Of The Millennium: The Relation Between Religious And Social Change," in *Studies In Social Movements A Social Psychological Perspective* Ed. By B. Mclaughlin. London: The Free Press, 1982. p. 402.

[17] *Ibid.*

[18] *Ibid.*

strate throughout that an irreducible element of these movements is that they import traditions from the past and use them to respond to changing situations of deprivation. It is from this observation that we argue for an analytical paradigm or conceptual metaphor millenarianism as a radical response to deprivation, which becomes our hermeneutical tool that we use to penetrate the movements in question. Thus, the comparative approach of this school certainly has a positive contribution to our study.

However, Hobsbawn is a bit more careful with his comparative analysis than Cohn in that he does not venture much out of his circumscribed period and area mainly because he thinks there is a danger of getting into facile generalizations should one venture much out of one's period and area.[19] Cohn is much freer to relate the movements he deals with to each other and to equivalent and analogous movements elsewhere.[20] Following our earlier observation from Lewis' work we have no particular problem adopting Cohn's approach as it gives us the necessary free-play to provide samples from the Old Testament through the Inter-testament and New Testament periods to the present day, without necessarily getting into facile generalisations. Further, the comparative method by these two scholars and others comprises abstracting, selecting, classifying, comparing and explicitly or implicitly testing general hypothesis.[21] It is specifically

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19   *Ibid.*
20   *Ibid.*
21   *Ibid.*

because of the latter aspect of their comparative analysis that we agree with Cohn. It is much more acceptable to test general hypothesis on the basis of results from observations and analyses of a wider range of movements from a wider time period and cultural milieu than testing the hypothesis on the basis of results from a limited and congested study of an equally limited time period and area.

For that reason, we consider Cohn's findings in a greater detail than those of Hobsbawn. In his book "*The Pursuit of the Millennium*" (1970), Cohn focuses on what he calls the tradition of Revolutionary Eschatology and Mystical Anarchism as it developed in Western Europe between the 11th and 16th centuries respectively. For Cohn, Christian millenarianism is simply one variant of Christian eschatology.[22] Thus, there is a sense in which Cohn agrees quite neatly with our working assumption that what we regard as millenarianism can be viewed as one and the same thing as apocalypticism.

The book outlines millenarian sects, their social composition and the social setting in which the movements operated. We take particular interest on the social setting that originated the millenarian movements. In the introduction Cohn describes the peculiarities of the sects and in Chapter 2 he shows how the movements fit into the larger picture but the sociological import of the revolutionary eschatology emerges from chapter after chapter and it is summarized in the conclusion.

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[22]   N. Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium (Revised and Expanded Edition)*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1970, p. 15.

Cohn rightly points out that while millenarian movements have varied infinitely in attitude, from the most violent aggressiveness to the mildest pacifisms and from the most ethereal spirituality to the most earth bound materialism, and in social composition and function the circumstances that gave rise to these movements remain the same.[23] Cohn gives examples of the varieties of millenarianism and then focuses on the millenarianism that flourished among the rootless poor of Western Europe between the 11th and 16th centuries respectively, with particular focus on the circumstances that favoured the millenarianism.

Cohn's argument is that the poor did not create their own millenarianism or millenarian faiths but received them from would-be-prophets or would-be-messiahs.[24] According to him some millenarian prophet captured the grievances of the poor and because of their usual desire to improve the material conditions of their lives, the poor became transfused with the fantasies of a world reborn into innocence through a final apocalyptic massacre.[25] We refine this view in the relevant chapter below as we develop one of the key building blocks to our thesis and that is, the paradigm of Israelite Prophecy as a millenarian sect.

Without getting into details of whether or not millenarian beliefs were fantasies (a word which Cohn is fond of), or whether or not the beliefs were true, Cohn's argument

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23 *Ibid.*
24 *Ibid.*
25 *Ibid.*

brings to surface a syntagmatic connection among several aspects which, in our view, form some of the basic tenets of millenarian movements.

First, the millenarian movements are not to be conceived of as vague amorphous groups without a structure. Each group has a clearly discernible structure, vision and specific direction largely determined by the leader of the group. The leader is known by various titles, which include "cult prophet",[26] "messiah"[27] or as Cohn puts it, "would-be-prophet" or "would-be-messiah".[28] Also, these leaders are originators of what Cohn refers to as revolutionary eschatology, which in his definition is millenarianism.[29]

Second, and what interests us more, is the relationship that Cohn establishes between the millenarian belief and the Bible. The implication here is that the millenarian leader does not originate the millenarian faith from the vacuum but depends largely on the Bible. Cohn argues that the miscellaneous collections of prophecies inherited from antiquity were the raw material out of which millenarianism was born[30] but also for Cohn; all these prophecies were devices that the millenarian groups (at first Jewish and later Christian) consoled, fortified and asserted themselves when confronted by the threat or reality of

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26 A. O. Majola, "Cults : When Christians Go Haywire," in *Step vol. 8 No. 11* p. 9.

27 *Ibid.*

28 N. Cohn, *Op. Cit.* p. 15.

29 *Ibid.*

30 *Ibid.,* p. 19.

oppression.[31] In our own terms, the prophecies were devices with which the millenarian responded to various forms of deprivation. This pattern is also true for contemporary millenarian movements. Therefore, a major component of our thesis is that the Bible is the fertile ground upon which the millenarian thrives.

The other main insight gained from Cohn's argument is the link between millenarianism and deprivation; a link which this study explores. Again we note that millenarian thought, which Cohn refers to as the "central fantasy", forms the basic ideology, which the millenarian consider as the whole truth that stands at the very core of their cosmology. As such, it becomes the basis for action and hence pivotal in effecting change in society. Thus, the millenarian movements are basically revolutionary.

Hobsbawn, in his *Primitive Rebels (1959),* develop the same argument albeit in his own way. He focused on five primitive forms of social agitation namely, banditry, rural secret societies, peasant revolutionary movements of the millenarian sort, pre-industrial urban "mobs" and their movements, and some labour sects.[32]

Rightly, Hobsbawn qualifies his use of the term "primitive". He is correct to say that the movements are not "primitive" and "archaic" as such for they belong to a world that has long since known the state (e.g. soldiers, prisons, tax collectors etc.), class differentiation and ex-

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[31] *Ibid.*

[32] E. J. Hobsbawn, *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries.* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1959. p. 1.

ploitation by landlords etc.[33] This point is valuable for us in so far as it clears a potential misconception that our study is concerned with an issue of antiquity and therefore the relevance of the investigation to the main problems of present-day society is dubious. On the contrary, our study is present-orientated and as we demonstrate throughout, relevant to the main problems of present-day society. Therefore, we embrace whole-heatedly Hobsbawn's careful qualification.

We take particular interest in Hobsbawn's observations on the peasant revolutionary movements of the millenarian sort because it is these that are directly relevant to our thesis. According to him these movements stand in sharp contrast with the first two movements in his list and compare with pre-industrial urban "mobs" and some labour sects which, according to Hobsbawn, are clearly revolutionary and not just reformist.[34] Of interest to us is Hobsbawn's observation that the millenarian movements, therefore, are more easily modernized or absorbed into modern social movements.[35]

Hobsbawn views the relationship between the millenarian and modernization in a somewhat graphic manner. He puts it neatly and shows clearly the task of his book in one paragraph that becomes very crucial for us too. For this reason we quote him verbatim:

> The men and women with who this book is concerned differ from the Englishmen in that they have not been born

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[33]   *Ibid.,* p. 3.
[34]   *Ibid.*
[35]   *Ibid.*

into the world of capitalism as a Tyneside engineer, with four generations of trade unionism at this back, has been born into it. They come into it as first generation immigrants, or even more catastrophic, it comes to them from outside, insidiously by operation of economic forces which they do not understand and over which they have no control, or brazenly by conquest, revolutions and fundamental changes of law whose consequences they may not understand, even when they have helped to bring them about. They do not as yet grow with or into modern society: they are broken into it. Their problem is how to adapt themselves to its life and struggles, and the subject of this book is the process of adaptation (or failure to adapt) as expressed in their archaic social movements.[36]

We follow Hobsbawn in his basic task of investigating the process of adaptation. We agree with him that this process comes in the wake of a confrontation between the millenarian and a modern world that either comes to them or into which the millenarian are broken insidiously by operation of economic forces which the millenarian neither necessarily understand nor have control over. However, we take exception to Hobsbawn's attempt at underplaying the role of the millenarian in the revolutionary process especially in effecting change by way of bringing about the modernization.

Hobsbawn's basic thesis is that the revolution or modernization does not take place, or it takes place only very slowly and incompletely, if the matter is left to the millenarian movements themselves.[37] It takes place most com-

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36   *Ibid.,* p. 3.
37   *Ibid.,* p. 6

pletely and successfully, if the millenarian movement is fitted into a framework of organization, theory and programme that comes to it from outside.[38] This implies that the millenarian themselves are not capable of bringing that revolution from within themselves, and this is the argument that outcrops at various points within his book. For instance, he states explicitly in his analysis of the Lazzaretti millenarian movement that the millenarian are not makers of revolution, they expect the revolution to make itself by divine intervention.[39]

It is worth noting that from his comparison of the millenarian and say, labour sects, Hobsbawn argues that the millenarian differ with such other movements in that the labour sects and such urban industrial "mobs" are aided in their task by say, decisive strategy and tactics (e.g. mass demonstrations) and doctrines of organization.[40] In this case change comes from within the organization. Whereas with the millenarian, the part of the people is to gather together watching the signs of the coming doom, listening to the prophet's prediction of the coming of this day and to undertake certain ritual measures as preparation for the day.[41] It is in this light that Hobsbawn concludes that the millenarian movement therefore does not transform itself into a modern revolutionary movement

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[38]   *Ibid.*
[39]   *Ibid.,* p. 59.
[40]   *Ibid.,* p. 58
[41]   *Ibid.*

from within but change comes from outside[42] and this is consistent with his thesis.

Hobsbawn's analysis does not find favour in our eyes wholly. Although he mentions the term doctrine a lot, Hobsbawn does not specifically discuss the role of doctrine (what he correctly defines as "faith and beliefs")[43] in the operations of the millenarian. When it comes to discussing this, like all the other social anthropologists, he immediately develops cold feet and refuses to tread that path. Rather he chooses to tread a path common and familiar to all of them. He examines the outward form of the millenarian, in particular, the role of ritual in the operations of the movements. Thus, he fails to give deserved prominence to what Lewis calls the "spiritual experience" of the movements, and precisely this is where we mark our point of departure.

B.R. Wilson

In his *Sects and society* (1961) B.R. Wilson, like Cohn and Hobsbawn, seeks to prove that the poor, socially neglected and culturally deprived were those who, in the main, and especially in the early days of the society he studied, here drawn into the millenarian movements he discussed in the book. Thus, like the scholars discussed earlier, he draws a sharp relationship between deprivation and millenarianism.[44]

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[42]   *Ibid.*

[43]   *Ibid.*

[44]   B.R Wilson, *Sects And Society. A Sociological Study Of Three Religious Groups In Britain*. London: William Heinemann Ltd. 1961. p. 317.

However, Wilson like Hobsbawn underplays the role of the beliefs and faith of the millenarian in responding to and influencing change in their society. For instance, he argues that among the Elim, one of the millenarian movements he studied, there is intellectual deprivation.[45] Novel reading is attacked as hindering Christian life and he suggests a possible reason for this, which is, lack of time.[46] From his discussion it seems clear that this action is strictly related to their beliefs and faith. The advent will bring he believers' period of service to a close, and therefore, it is necessary to serve the Lord now for the day of the end is even nearer.[47] If the end is this near, there is therefore no time to waste reading novels. So, we could conclude that this eschatological belief is what influences them to act in this particular manner. This, as we see it, does not come from outside. Thus, like Hobsbawn, Wilson for some bizarre reason, refrains from discussing the role of faith and belief in the operations of the millenarian.

Strangely enough, Wilson states it that the eschatology of the sects is perhaps the most emphatic expression of their basic orientation.[48] However, he simply offers a survey of this emphatic expression with reference to three sects, perhaps so as to quickly reach his conclusion that deviant social expression is to be understood only in terms of the social structure in which it arises and this is

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45   *Ibid.,* p. 84
46   *Ibid.,* p. 83
47   *Ibid.*
48   *Ibid.*

no less true of the organizations that institutionalise this deviant behaviour.[49] Therefore, in essence, Wilson does not differ from Hobsbawn in so far as both underplay the role of the millenarian themselves in bringing about the revolutionary process.

As we argue in our point of departure, it is here that most scholars' assessment of millenarian movements appears to misfire. With such an analysis the scholars find no rational political core within the millenarian movements especially as they seem to lack sophistication, an effective revolutionary strategy and tactics to this effect. Hence, the majority of the scholars view the movements as politically innocent, ineffectual movements comprising eccentric otherworldly mystics and visionaries.

We argue that it is difficult to accept that these movements which are fast growing and to a certain extent, causing quite a stir in political circles are not without a programme, an internal logic putting them together and inspiring them to act consistently as they do. It is difficult to even conclude that they are impractical and utopian. This observation is reason enough to explore other factors influencing the continued existence of the movements and the reasons why they continue to thrive despite the serious deprivation they experience more often. S. J. Palmer and N. Finn as well as W. Kempf recently investigated other possible factors influencing the process of revolution and adaptation of the millenarian.

[49]   *Ibid.*

S. J. Palmer and N. Finn

Palmer and Finn's article is of interest to us because we share common operational assumptions. First, the two authors assume, as we do, that the phenomenon of millenarianism is one and the same phenomenon as apocalypticism. Second, they envisage a direct link between millenarianism and prophetic activity.

However, what is of primary interest to us is the thrust of their research. The two scholars investigated millenarian activity in two Quebec New Rights Movements. The major focus of their study was the question why one group failed but the other thrived on the experience of what they viewed as "prophetic failure".[50] The scholars worked within the framework of five conditions laid out by L. Festinger and others (1956) and the theories of Hardyck and Braden (1962) as well as J. G. Gager (1975), all scholars who postulated that if the millenarian activity is approached not as a set of beliefs but rather as a collective ritual of initiation into a new type of religious organization, then an important factor in the survival of millenarian movements is the quality of the ritual experience.[51] We witness once more an emphasis on what we have called outward form i.e. ritual experience.

Marking a point of departure from the above, Palmer and Finn made a comparison of W. Barton's aesthetically satisfying apocalypse with the unmitigated fiasco that en-

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[50] S. J. Palmer and N. Finn, "Coping with Apocalypse in Canada-Experience of End Time in La-Mission-de- Le Spirit-Saint and The Institute of Applied Metaphysics", In *Sociological Analysis Vol. 53*. p. 398.

[51] *Ibid.*

sued in La Mission de I'Espirit Saint. From the comparison, the scholars concluded that, without undermining the role of the ritual experience in the survival of the millenarian movements, a very crucial factor in their survival is the prophet,[52] who is usually the leader of the movement. For Palmer and Finn, the prophet who is skilful as a stage manager and group facilitator can avert the crisis of "cognitive dissonance" and induce in the participants a state of "non-cognitive consonance"[53].

However, we note that these studies do sideline the role of doctrine or to use our terminology, the millenarian ideology in arousing and shaping the expectations and actions of the millenarian and hence the significance of this in both the survivals of movements as well as the movements' fecundity to effect changes in society. Palmer and Finn's study is inadequate for us in so far as it does not investigate how the prophet relates to, and makes use of, the millenarian ideology in averting cognitive dissonance among members and inducing what Palmer and Finn refer to as "a state of non-cognitive consonance". Thus, their picture of the millenarian movements becomes incomplete. However, a scholar who almost ventures into the same direction as ours is W. Kempf.

W. Kempf

Kempf studied factors that influenced conversion to Christianity in Melanesia. According to Kempf, this conversion to Christianity has often been accompanied by the

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[52]   *Ibid.,* p. 413.
[53]   *Ibid.,* p. 414.

expectation of an imminent millennium.[54] For Kempf the
expectation of a comprehensive and almost immediate
transformation could be read as an expression of a cul-
tural concept, which sees real change as an occurrence
premised on discontinuity and resulting in the total trans-
formation of society.[55] From his study of a millenarian
movement among the Ngaing around 1930, Kempf ar-
gued that in this concept of change a cultural schema
emerges that has durability over time.[56]

Kempf's study interests us more than that of Palmer
and Finn in that it ventures into the expectations of the
members in bringing about a cultural concept that results
in real social change. Vital to our study is Kempf's argu-
ment that the process of Christianisation arouses the ex-
pectations and actions that bring about the cultural con-
cept. In our terminology they are aroused by certain
Christian beliefs and, or, doctrines. Unfortunately, Kempf
is not bold enough to identify and isolate explicitly these
beliefs and to investigate exactly how the expectations and
actions are aroused during the early Christianisation of
the devotees so as to bring to surface the role of the doc-
trines in shaping the faith of the millenarian. As we state
later, it is here that we mark a point of departure, but at
least for the time, in Kempf we come across the sugges-

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[54] W. Kempf, "The Second Coming of the Lord – Early Christianiza-
      tion, Episodic Time and Cultural Construction of Continuity in Si-
      bon", In *Oceania Vol. 63 Issue 1* 1992, p. 72.
[55] *Ibid.*
[56] *Ibid.,* p. 84.

tion that the movements do have the capacity within themselves to effect change.

However, for us to be able to arrive at a compact, comprehensive point of departure, it is necessary to review, though briefly for reasons stated earlier, the last two categories of literature on the subject under study.

Literature dealing with what can be regarded as Biblical Millenarianism

We are aware of scholarly attempts to often try to distinguish between a "millenarian movement" and a "sect". However, we are satisfied with B. Holmberg's argument that in essence the distinction is tissue-thin and primarily all the scholars view early Christianity as a "millenarian movement", a term that best describes the views of both camps.[57] We do not get into details of the works under this category of literature as one way or the other they form large portions of chapters to come. We take particular interest on those we select below because the works make observations that incorporate crucial building blocks to our paradigm and conceptual metaphor of millenarianism.

Two of the earliest attempts at applying sociological concepts and models to the understanding of early Christianity are J. G. Gager and R. Scroggs.

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[57]   B. Holmberg, *Sociology and the New Testament. An Appraisal.* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990. p. 77.

J. G. Gager and R. Scroggs

Both scholars' works were published simultaneously in 1975 and both used the comparative method albeit in different ways. Gager compared early Christianity to millenarian movements mainly in contemporary Melanesia, while Scroggs compared the earliest church to a sect model constructed from an analysis of Christian sects in the middle ages and past Reformation centuries tracing back the model to as far back as M. Weber's first remarks on "Church" and "sect".[58]

Gager, in his *Kingdom and Community* (1975), sets out to investigate problems associated with theoretical models from recent works in social sciences and as he claims, the models were formulated independently of Christian evidence.[59] Gager's aim was to test these models against data from early Christians. The models he focused on came from cultural anthropologists, I. C. Jarvie, Y. Talmon, P. Worsely but he relied heavily on K. O. L. Burridge.

Of interest to us is his application of the model of the millenarian movement in particular, his view of Christianity as a millenarian sect. Gager, largely following Jarvie, pointed out five basic traits of millenarian movements, which, according to him, could be found manifest among all millenarian movements. The first four were adopted from Jarvie while the fifth one was Gager's own addition, which is also pointed out, by Talmon, Worsley and Burridge. The five basic traits, which we discuss in detail

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58 *Ibid.*
59 J. G. Gager, *Kingdom and Community: The Social World of Early Christianity*. New Jersey: Englewood Cliffs, 1975. p. 12.

later, are as follows: the promise of an imminent arrival of heaven on earth; the overthrow of the present social order; the communal life that is characterized by a strong release of emotional energy; the very brief life span of the movement; and the central role of a messianic, prophetic, or charismatic leader.[60] Such movements arise from among the "disinherited" to borrow Worsley's terminology.[61]

According to Gager, the majority of the Palestinians during Jesus' time could be viewed as the disinherited. Large populations were politically alienated and repressed and they did not have access to the means of production. Religiously or culturally, the majority were also alienated in that the religious values and means to what J. L. Cox refers to as the *axis mundi*,[62] and Gager "the sacred centre of reality",[63] made these people feel like perfect strangers as these were difficult to reach. Gager shows that such a situation was ripe for the emergence of a millenarian movement.[64]

As we discuss later, Gager sees the five features of the millenarian movement in the Jesus Movement. However, what interests us more is Gager's emphasis on the role of Jesus as the messianic, prophetic and charismatic leader who typically articulated the needs and aspirations of the disinherited in the new vision of the world, as it ought to

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[60] *Ibid.,* p. 21 (c.f. K. O. L. Burridge, *New Heaven, New Earth: A Study of Millenarian Activities.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969 p. 1

[61] P. Worsley, *The Trumpet Shall Sound.*

[62] J. L. Cox, *Expressing the Sacred.* Harare: University Zimbabwe Publications, 1990.

[63] B. Holmberg, *Op. Cit.*

[64] J. G. Gager, *Op. Cit.* p. 22.

be and soon would be.[65] The leader (Jesus) gave a new
and radical interpretation of the old means to redemption
(Torah and temple cult) at the same time criticizing old
values and ways of access to the sacred centre of reality.
When we focus on the leader of the millenarian, this is
the point that interests us. Of interest also is Gager's
characterization of the community around Jesus. The
community around Jesus typified a new world, a true ver-
sion of society founded anew and in immediate contact
with Holy One.[66] It was strongly egalitarian in that it had
no fixed structures and traditional status distinctions con-
cerning wealth, sex and kinship were discarded.[67] Thus, it
was a revolutionary movement.

This description of the Jesus Movement is similar to
that offered by Scroggs. Following W. Stark, Scroggs out-
lined seven features of a religious sect, which, according
to him, fit the earliest Palestinian Christianity that
emerged directly from the mission of Jesus.[68] Although
he outlines seven characteristics, his description is not
necessarily different from Gager's and as argued earlier
the distinction between a millenarian movement and a
sect is tissue-thin, if at all it is there.

Scroggs sees the Jesus community as a sect protesting
against economic and societal alienation and repression.
The alienation was not only economic but even cultural as

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65 *Ibid.*

66 *Ibid.,* p. 22.

67 *Ibid.*

68 R. Scroggs, "The Earliest Christian Communities as Sectarian
    Movement", in *Christianity, Judaism and Other Greco-Roman Cults.
    Studies for Morton Smith at Sixty, Vol. II*. Leiden: Brill, 1975 p. 7.

stated earlier by Gager that the purity requirements, especially of the Pharisees, made it almost impossible for the ordinary Jew to get easy access to the sacred centre of reality. Thus, with the coming of a messianic charismatic leader who redefined the old values and means to the sacred centre of reality, the Jesus community became a new counter-culture of its own.[69] Like the description offered by Gager, the Jesus community was egalitarian.[70] What interests us is his additional description of the members of the movement. According to Scroggs members were expected to show total commitment to the ideals of the community by behaving in a morally acceptable way as well as in the way the thought and expressed doctrine.[71] The latter feature, as we observe later, is certainly true of the Jehovah's Witnesses in particular and for that reason it forms one of our major interests. Unfortunately, Scroggs does not pursue the latter feature and it is here that we mark our point of departure.

His conclusion is a summary of his intention and what he thinks is the contribution of his study, which is, "We now have a basically different gestalt from which to view the data"[72]. In other words, we now have a new perspective in which we understand the New Testament documents, not primarily as theological documents, but as

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[69] B. Holmberg, *Op. Cit*. p. 89.
[70] R. Scroggs, "The Sociological Interpretation of the New Testament" in *New Testament Studies Vol. 26.* 1980. p. 172.
[71] *Ibid.*, "The Earliest Christian Communities as Sectarian Movement" in *Social-Scientific Approaches to the New Testament* Ed. By D. G. Horrell. Edinburgh: T. & T Clark 1999.
[72] *Ibid.,* p. 21.

literary products from feelings of "a group of people who have experienced the hurt of the world and the healing of communal acceptance"[73]. Thus, the link between deprivation and the emergence of millenarian movements becomes clear from Scroggs' analysis.

Both Gager and Scroggs, as is expected, attracted their own share of criticism, prominent critics being T. F. Best, C. Rowland, J. Z. Smith and G. Baumbach.

Criticism of Gager and Scroggs

The criticism has been given a special place here because indirectly the criticism can also be levelled against our own efforts here. What Gager and Scroggs endeavoured to do is basically our own thrust and therefore, as we deal with the criticism levelled against these two scholars, we also deal with criticism that can possibly be directed to us.

All four critics cited above think that the methodologies employed by Gager and Scroggs respectively are indeed suspect. However, we are more concerned with the criticism directed to Gager in particular than Scroggs, as it is criticism aimed at bringing to surface the deficiencies of the millenarian model, which is our major paradigmatic model or conceptual metaphor in this study. Therefore, we highlight more criticism from the first three scholars who criticize Gager. Baumbach's criticism is dealt with only briefly.

According to Best, Gager's methodology is suspect in so far as he draws models from a cultural milieu far re-

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[73]   *Ibid.*

moved from the first century Palestine.[74] For Best, the cultural and historical gap between Melanesian cargo cults in the twentieth century and the early Christians in the first century is simply too great to allow any meaningful and convincing comparison.[75]

For Rowland, the time gap for him is not a problem although he suggests closing the gap a bit to focus on the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, respectively. However, Rowland is not comfortable with using data from millenarian movements outside the Judaeo-Christian tradition. His major concern is to compare and contrast radical movements in Europe that unlike twentieth century Melanesian cargo cults are closer to the early church in outlook and are better documented.[76] As we argued before when we looked at the Cohn school of thought, the question of the cultural and historical lacunae that these critics raise should not be a problem for us. In fact, this is the very purpose of the use of models. We deal with this point under methodology. Of interest to us is his focus is the process of transformation in these movements where non-fulfilment of hopes is compensated by a complete spiritualization of what was once political utopianism.[77] In this way his major goal is not different from that of Kempf reviewed earlier and eventually ours as well.

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[74] T. F. Best, "The Sociological Study of the New Testament: Promise and Peril of a New Discipline", in *The Scottish Journal of Theology Vol. 36.,* 1983., p. 189.

[75] *Ibid.*

[76] C. Rowland, "Reading the New Testament Sociologically: An Introduction", in *Theology Vol. 88,* 1985. p. 360.

[77] *Ibid.,* p. 361.

Smith raises more or less the same objection as that of Best. According to Smith, Gager uses the works of three anthropologists, Burridge, Worsley and Jarvie to construct his model of the millenarian movement without taking cognisance of the deep theoretical difference among them and thus, his acquaintance with the chosen model becomes shallow.[78] Certainly our knowledge of social anthropology is not deep and wide enough to allow us to verify this critique. However, we do agree with Gager's theoretical standpoint in the light of the assumptions of exegesis and biblical hermeneutics, which we outline in detail under methodology.

We can clarify this point further by referring to an interesting point that B. Holmberg raises. Holmberg argues that similarities between sixteenth century Christian movements (and there is no reason why we should not extend this to include twenty first century movements) and the early church can be more readily explained as attempts by the later Christians to emulate the New Testament ideal than as the influence of some universal millenarian pattern.[79]

We contend that we are faced with a chicken-and-egg situation here. Is it not a valid assumption that, the fact that Christians everywhere and at all times attempt to emulate the New Testament ideal results in similarities which basically form a universal millenarian pattern among Christians of different time periods and milieu?

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[78] J. Z. Smith, "Too Much Kingdom, Too Little Community", in *Zygote: Journal of Religion and Science Vol. 13*, 1978 p. 127.

[79] B. Holmberg, *Op. Cit.,* p. 80.

We take this latter assumption as valid, and this is our basic rationale for comparing selected biblical millenarian movements and contemporary millenarian movements in Zimbabwe.

Our review of this category of literature cannot be complete without considering the works of W.A. Meeks and R. Jewett, respectively on the subject of our study.

W.A Meeks and R. Jewett

In a lecture at the International Colloquium on Apocalypticism in Uppsala, August 12-17, 1979, Meeks probed the question whether Pauline Christianity can rightfully be called a millenarian movement. Right from the onset we note, and interestingly so that this symposium was called to discuss apocalypticism and millenarianism, Meeks discussed the two as one and the same phenomenon. Thus, Meeks probed the subject in much the same direction as ours using similar, if not congruent, assumptions to ours.

Meeks noted, and correctly so, that no consensus exists among social scientists concerning "a unified theory of the functions of millenarian beliefs which could then generate a series of predictive hypotheses to be tested by our historical and exegetical research.[80] However, Meeks proceeded to formulate six general theses upon which social scientists could agree in principle. Holmberg summarized these theses in a language that is easily understood and because these theses form the theoretical

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[80]   W.A. Meeks, "social Functions of Apocalyptic Language in Pauline Christianity", in: *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World*, Ed. D. Hellholm, Tuebingen, 1983. p. 687.

frameworks of most of our chapters, we reproduce them verbatim from Holmberg hereunder:

(a) The meaning of millenarian (or rather eschatological) beliefs must be understood from the function they serve for the groups that hold them.

(b) Usually prophetic revelations provide the centre or ordering complex of the beliefs.

(c) These beliefs introduce innovations in a traditional society, often by new combinations of accepted traditions.

(d) Members of millenarian movements have often experienced frustrations of their access to social power and its media of expression.

(e) The media for change is primarily cognitive i.e. a counter interpretation of reality that makes sense of a world that seems to have gone mad. It is not first a compensation for (relative) deprivation, but aims at relieving cognitive dissonance.

(f) The myths and beliefs pave the way for the building of a new plausibility structure, or in other words, for the institutionalisation of a new, alternative community.[81]

Much of what Meeks said about the use of apocalyptic language in Paul we have dealt with it elsewhere.[82] Therefore, this preoccupation of Meeks is not our focus for now. We are more interested in Meeks' conclusion that the millenarian movement is a useful model in describing the Pauline communities and his grounds for applying such a model.

From his lecture cited above and his later work, *The Fist Urban Christians* (1983) in which he utilized insights

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[81]   B. Holmberg, *Op. Cit.,* p. 82.
[82]   We examined this subject in the M. A. Thesis where Paul was characterized as an apocalyptic Christian theologian.

from the lecture, Meeks agreed basically with most of the above outlined general theses on millenarian movements. Of interest to us are his highlights on the role of the prophet leader in articulating beliefs that see the origin, growth and development of the movements. In Paul, Meeks saw a millenarian prophet who skilfully incorporated the experiences of his community into a master complex of metaphors built upon the kerugma of the crucified messiah, Son of God, and replicated in the experiences of both Paul and other Christians.[83] In other words, the apostle articulated a belief system that became the core of a cosmology around which a community that saw itself as having been founded anew, was constituted. Thus, the status and function of such a cosmology was not just reflexive but also constitutive.[84]

In *The first Urban Christians,* Meeks dealt with yet another interest of ours. He pursued the function of the millenarian belief system within the movement, but what is more interesting to us; he linked this to the concept of relative deprivation.

Using the "millenarian movement" as a comparative model in a bid to account for the seemingly diverse and often contradictory aspects of Pauline Christianity, Meeks pointed out that the Pauline communities experienced deprivation which however, was an experience of downward social mobility that was perceived to be the result of

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[83] W. A. Meeks, *Op. Cit.* p. 701.
[84] *Ibid.*

the social ills of the communities' social world.[85] So, Meeks saw in the millenarian belief system a tool that is both a critique of the contemporary world order that had gone wrong and a kit of tools that were instrumental in the construction of a new social order that was basically egalitarian. To use Meeks' own argumentation, the use of apocalyptic language in I Thessalonians, Galatians and I Corinthians shows that despite the different emphases, the three letters' central concern is the solidarity and stability of the congregations and this fits neatly the model of the millenarian movement in which the myth of the coming world-change supports both the shift from the traditional social relations to the sect's special relations and also the internal institution-building of the sect.[86] This implies that contrary to Hobsbawn's conviction, Meeks believes that the millenarian are quite capable of bringing revolution from within themselves.

R. Jewett in his *"The Thessalonians Correspondence: Pauline Rhetoric and Millenarian Piety" (1986),* not only showed an improvement in approach from his predecessors, especially Gager and Meeks, in that he narrowed his study to one specific congregation, showing great care in filling as complete a background as can be possible concerning the political, economic, social and religious conditions of the Thessalonians' community, but also gathered insights from the majority of the scholars reviewed so far to describe in as thorough a manner how the beliefs,

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[85]   W. A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social world of the Apostle Paul.* New Haven, 1983, p. 171.

[86]   *Ibid.,* p. 173

symbols and the typical behaviour patterns of a millenarian movement form a consistent whole.[87] While Jewett says much more, we are interested in his conclusion that within the Thessalonians community therefore, there existed cultural, economic and political conditions, which were conducive to the emergence and growth of a millenarian movement, which not only proclaimed the arrival of the millennium but also proceeded to act on that assumption.[88] Thus, compared to alternative models like the "enthusiastic", "Gnostic" and the *"Theios aner"* models respectively which have been used to analyse the letter, the "millenarian movement" model, for Jewett, makes much better sense of the Thessalonians letter.[89] Thus, Jewett finds a good fit between the model and the socio-historical reality in Thessalonica, but what is more important for us, he finds a close link between the emergence of the millenarian movement in Thessalonica and the socio-political and economic conditions of the congregation.

Literature dealing with the Jehovah's Witnesses and Johane Masowe in Zimbabwe

The review of works in this category is brief, partly by design and partly for reasons beyond our control. First, for reasons already stated, the majority of the literature in this category is reviewed extensively in a relevant chapter later. Second, these movements in Zimbabwe have not been

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[87] *Ibid.,* p. 179.

[88] R. Jewett, *The Thessalonians Correspondence: Pauline Rhetoric and Millenarian Piety.* Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986. p. 165.

[89] *Ibid.*

studied extensively so much so that one could boast of a vast amount of literature available on them. Of course, a sizeable amount of literature on the Jehovah's Witnesses exists but the literature deals largely with Jehovah's Witnesses outside Zimbabwe. Very little has been written on the Johane Masowe and, as argued earlier, a review of works dealing with this movement involves a review of some primary sources.

Both in this review and the relevant chapter we begin with the Jehovah's Witnesses for the reason already stated that literature on them is easily available and in most cases more detailed that that on the Johane Masowe. So, from this literature we can isolate as many features of millenarian movements as we can possibly find and then use the little available literature on the Johane Masowe to complete the whole picture. Certainly, sharp differences between the two movements do exist but since the differences are the major subject of discussion in our comparative analysis of the two movements in the relevant chapter, in this review we only mention them in passing.

Selected Literature dealing with the Jehovah's Witnesses

While a lot of literature does exist on the Jehovah's Witnesses in general, literature specifically on the Jehovah's Witnesses in Zimbabwe may not be as abundant as on the movement's activities elsewhere outside Zimbabwe, say, in Zambia, Malawi and South Africa. We review literature that we actually use in the relevant chapter briefly first and then mention literature dealing with the movements elsewhere and therefore, literature that helps us to conceptualise the movement's exploits in Zimbabwe. Of in-

terest in this regard is P. Pinto's article on the movement's operations in Mozambique. While the article is not focused on Zimbabwe in particular, it gives us relevant data on the historical origins of the movement and possibly the spread of the Witnesses to Zimbabwe.

P. Pinto

In his article "The Jehovah's Witnesses in Colonial Mozambique" in *LFM Social Sciences & Missions No. 17 Dec. 2005* Pinto reviews the history of the Jehovah's Witnesses tracing their historical origins from Charles Taze Russell. Of interest to us is the valuable data that Pinto reveals on the missionary activities of one Joseph Booth who spread the Jehovah's Witnesses' teaching in South Africa, Zambia and Malawi. We argue that Booth's native disciples Elliot Kamwana and John Chilembwe must have influenced the spreading of the teachings of the Jehovah's Witnesses into Zimbabwe, then Rhodesia Nyasaland. Both these two disciples are known to have been associated with revolutionary movements in their respective countries. Kamwana was associated with the *Kitawala* movements while Chilembe was associated with the proto-nationalist revolt against the British authorities in Malawi, then Nyasaland.

We take particular interest in the fact that both opposed the authorities and their opposition was as a result of the deprivation they experienced especially that concerned with tax. The millenarian belief in the end of the current world and the ushering in of a new aeon characterized by egalitarianism became attractive to the native converts who interpreted it to mean the end of the white rule and

the oppressive system of taxes. Booth himself originated a millenarian vision of an Africa ruled by Africans and opposed the partitioning of Africa by the imperialistic European countries.

We see Johane Masowe opposing the same oppressive system of taxes. He was imprisoned twice for this. Earlier his father had also been imprisoned for the same reason. In fact, Johane was born while his father was in prison for having refused to pay tax. Thus, Pinto's work is valuable for us in two or three ways. The first one is the obvious one, and that is it provides data on the origins of the Jehovah's Witnesses and how they probably came to Southern Africa. Second, it shows that the movement originated in Southern Africa as a response to oppression or to use our terminology, deprivation. Therefore, looking at these two valuable pieces of data alone, Pinto's work helps vindicate our thesis. However, the work also helps us to provide a rationale for comparing two morphologically different movements on the basis of a common element in their beliefs and a common response to an equally common stimulus and that is, the oppressive system of taxes that resulted in relative deprivation. Other works that help us conceptualise our thesis in so far as the dissertation assumes the various arguments in these works are discussed briefly below.

W. C. Chirwa (et. al.)

These scholars' work entitled, *The Life and Work of the Most Celebrated Preacher of the Jehovah's Witnesses* contributes most of our knowledge on the Jehovah's Witnesses. It is particularly important for us in so far as it chronicles

this preacher's religious and political activities in Nkata Bay (1908-1956) but what is more important, it examines the impact (both religious and political) of his activities in the region in question.

J. R. Hooker
The knowledge from the above work is complemented by Hooker's article, "Witnesses and Watchtower in the Rhodesia-Nyasaland", in the sixth volume (1965) of the *Journal of African History*. This piece of work is particularly valuable for us in so far as it outlines the distinctive political profile of the Jehovah's Witnesses.

S. Cross
In his article, "Independent Churches and Independent State: Jehovah's Witnesses in East and Central Africa" in *Christianity in Independent Africa* (1978) S. Cross offers valuable evaluation of the involvement of the witnesses in the political activities of an independent state.

K. Fiedler
Another piece of work along these lines is K. Fiedler's "Power at the Receiving End: The Jehovah's Witnesses' Experience in One-Party Malawi", in *God, People and Power in Malawi: Democratisation in Theological Perspective* (1996). Like Cross, Fiedler offers an evaluation of the church-state relationship focusing on the political involvement of the Witness in the political life of independent Malawi.

K. E. Fields

The latter two works have insights, which can be sharpened further if they are contrasted with insights from Fields who looks at the involvement of the witnesses in a colonial setting. His work, *Revival and Rebellion in Colonial Central Africa* (1983), is valuable in this regard.

Valuable Primary Sources

While other primary sources are discussed in the relevant chapter including interviews and notes from lessons and services which the writer and his research had with several Witnesses from different Kingdom Halls mainly in Harare and Mutare, the following publications of the Watchtower Bible and tract Society are valuable to us in so far as they link directly with our overall thesis and are therefore worth noting in this review section:

a) *Zvapupu ZvaJehovah Zvinoita Kuda KwaMwari Mukubatana Munyika Yose* (1986)
b) Jehovah's Witnesses Who Are They? (2000)
c) *Zvapupu ZvaJehovah Ndivanaani?* (2000)
d) *Mwari Anodei Kwatiri?* (1996)
e) Reasoning From the Scriptures (1985).

The latter publication is worth noting in so far as it deals at length with the subject of suffering for which it devotes close to eight pages.[90] Thus, insights from this piece of work do make possible our analysis of the doctrine and activities of this movement from the point of

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[90] *Reasoning from the Scriptures* New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1985. pp. 394-401.

view of the sociological principle of Relative Deprivation. Insights from the other tracts are cited in the relevant chapter.

Literature dealing with the Johane Masowe

Again our selection is deliberate and the depth of the review is determined by the fact that much of what we may want to say here we say that in the relevant chapter. We note the views of four major scholars on the Johane Masowe in Zimbabwe and then we review two primary sources on the movement. When we review the latter we also bring into the review valuable notes on oral data we gathered from the field.

C. M. Dillon-Malone, B. Sundkler, M. Engelke and I. Mukonyora

Concerning the Johane Masowe, scholarship revolves around the works of C.M. Dillon-Malone submitted as a PhD thesis, to Forham University in 1976 and B. Sundkler's articles on Independent Churches respectively. Apart from few other references in books and articles on African Independent Churches, recently and close at home, there have been two more scholars who have shown exclusive interest in the Johane Masowe. One is M. Engelke, with whom this writer has had the opportunity to do field research among the Johane Masowe veChishanu in Chitungwiza for six months. Engelke is carrying out an ongoing research on this particular branch of the Johane Masowe, which refers to itself as the Johane Masowe veChishanu.

Another scholar is, I. Mukonyora who submitted her PhD thesis to the University of Zimbabwe in 1996 on another group of the Johane Masowe mainly based in Mufakose. Once again, these works are cited extensively in the relevant chapter and therefore, we review only a few aspects which may help us state our point of departure and hence, these are reviewed.

Dillon-Malone and Sundkler offer comprehensive surveys of the history of the Johane Masowe movement and in most cases agree on certain dates, events and venues of the events. They agree in principle that the movement originated from Johane Masowe whose real name is difficult to give as; according to Sundkler he surrounded himself with a tightly-knit community that knew him and protected him as a secret messiah who was to remain unknown to the world at large.[91] He preached among the Shona and Ndebele and following harassment from government officials and chiefs, the apostles began to look for a suitable place in South Africa where converts had been won through the preaching of an Ndebele-Zulu evangelist named Ernest Maposa.[92] They finally settled in Port Elizabeth in the district of Korsten from where they got their popular nickname, the "Korsten Basket Makers".[93]

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[91] C.M. Dillon-Malone, "The Korsten Basket Makers," in *Christianity South Of The Zambezi Vol. 2.* Ed. By M.F.C. Bourdillon. Gweru: Mambo Press, 1977. p. 214. (See also B. Sundkler, "The Concept Of Christianity In The African Independent Churches," in *African Studies vol. 20 no. 4.* 1961. p. 209).

[92] *Ibid.,* p. 212.

[93] *Ibid.,* p. 211.

Throughout the historical survey, there is evidence that the Johane Masowe were often in conflict with, and were therefore often harassed by, government officials. This study is interested in the factors influencing such a conflict. Further, their history reveals that especially white employers have never formally employed the Johane Masowe. This was partly because of the millenarian ideology of the Johane Masowe and partly because of the attitude of the white employers themselves.

Both Dillon-Malone and Sundkler provide hints to this and therefore vindicate our conviction. According to Dillon-Malone Johane Masowe himself had never placed much emphasis on the importance of money itself as he had believed the world to be very near,[94] and according to Sundkler he passed this apocalyptic expectation on to his followers as they lived in an atmosphere of apocalyptic expectation around Johane Masowe whom they knew as Bantu Messiah.[95] So there is evidence of close relation between his millenarian belief on one hand and how he eventually behaved and the direction that he led his whole movement on the other hand.

Johane Masowe however, realized how over the years his mission had suffered due to lack of economic security.[96] In other words, his mission of preaching the gospel had been hampered due to the fact that the "prophet" and his followers suffered some economic relative deprivation. If they were to be formally employed so as to get financial

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[94]   *Ibid.,* p. 212.
[95]   *Ibid.,* p. 214.
[96]   *Ibid.,* p. 212.

support for themselves they risked being corroded by the corrupt influences of the outside world. Therefore, the Masowe apostles had to be self-dependent and sufficient in their work and fulfilment of their material needs. Thus, Johane Masowe's religious beliefs influenced them to develop a strict code of living that, as they claim, was based on the Jewish faith.

One last point of interest from Dillon-Malone and Sundkler has to do with the deportation of the Johane Masowe from South Africa. When they were deported from South Africa, the Masowe were offered a choice of three possible sites for resettlement in the then Southern Rhodesia namely, Seke outside the then Salisbury, Zimunya outside the then Umtali or, Ntabazinduna outside Bulawayo.[97] Therefore, the present distribution of the Johane Masowe in Zimbabwe is by no means an accident. There is a large group of Masowe in Zimunya, Mutare, Seke in Chitungwiza and Bulawayo respectively. However, there are some notable differences between these groups and one wonders whether the Johane Masowe still exist as one unified movement. We discuss this in detail later in the relevant chapter.

However, these works do not get into certain details especially details of the personal life and prophecies of Johane the founder of the Johane Masowe movement. This we get from two books on the movement that chronicle eyewitness accounts on what happened in the life of Johane. For this reason we consider these two books our primary sources. These are *Izwi RaMwari*

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[97]   *Ibid.,* p. 217.

MuAfrica 1932[98] and C. Dillon Malone's *Gospel of God VaPositori VaJohane Masowe.* Lusaka: Teresianum Press, 1987.

Point Of Departure

From the literature review it is evident that a number of scholars have studied the phenomenon of millenarianism focusing on diverse aspects of the movements ranging from the structure of the movements to their beliefs and practices. We revisit what we consider as the important building blocks to our thesis from the various schools of thought reviewed. First, Lewis contributed a very important point that we cannot study effectively the social significance of millenarian movements without studying their spiritual experience, what we are referring to as the faith of the millenarian or the doctrine or ideology of the millenarian.

Cohn and Hobsbawn suggested that there is something that continues from the past, which is certainly irreducible, but a building block that is more crucial is the link they provide between millenarian movements and deprivation. Palmer and Finn make an additional link between millenarianism and apocalypticism suggesting as we do that we are dealing here with one and the same phenomenon. They also provide as we do, a direct link between prophecy and millenarianism. However, what interests us more is their area of focus mainly what makes

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[98]   It is not clear who wrote this book neither is the final compiler nor are the publishing company and the rest of the other bibliographical details stated.

one millenarian movement thrive while another fails. This is where our thesis builds from and therefore we treat this in a bit of detail.

A number of scholars follow the Festinger school of thought that maintains that if we consider millenarianism not as a set of beliefs but as a collective of initiation rituals initiating one into a new type of religious organisation then the factor that affects the survival of the millenarian movements is the quality of the initiation ritual experience.

Marking a point of departure from this thinking Palmer and Finn emphasised the role of the leader, the prophet who is skilful as a stage manager and group facilitator. For this school the prophet's skills as a stage manager are crucial to the survival of the movement in that the prophet leader using his or her skills can avert the crisis of cognitive dissonance and induce state of non-cognitive consonance within the group thereby assuring it survival and continuity.

Palmer and Finn's study hints to one suggestion that is crucial to our own point of departure. They point out that the millenarian ideology is important to shaping the expectations and actions of the millenarian; unfortunately this school does not pursue this intuition but we agree with Kempf who moves in this direction.

Our point of departure is that this debate on what makes the millenarian movements thrive when others are failing must not be divorced from the debate on the factors that influence the rise of the millenarian movements in the first place. The Gager-Scroggs school of thought investigates the model of millenarianism we are dealing

with in depth and proposes political and cultural deprivation caused by he removal of the majority of Palestinian Jews contemporary to Jesus from the religious values and centre of reality as factors influencing the rise of Christianity as a millenarian movement. Meeks agrees with this and adds the role of a leader in articulating the beliefs of the potential millenarian as a factor that influences the origin, growth and development of the millenarian movement.

In all these views we have essential building blocks to our own thesis. We argue that indeed millenarian movements originate from the context of deprivation. They survive by importing vital traditions from the past, which they metamorphose and adopt to address contemporary situations of deprivation. This implies that contrary to views of some of the scholars above, we argue that millenarianism originates from the nursery bed of prophecy and the millenarian ideology that sustains the movements comprises vital prophetic traditions imported from the past. It is this ideology that makes the movements thrive even in the face of the worst forms of deprivation. In other words, we argue that the Bible is the fertile ground upon which the millenarian thrives. We demonstrate our thesis by examining various examples from the Old Testament prophetic period, the Inter-testament and New Testament periods respectively and our own Zimbabwean context. Therefore, in the chapters that follow we substantiate more fully and in detail each building block to our thesis.

Methodology

A Brief Discourse on Methods

Like any academic study, our endeavour here requires methodology to reach its conclusion. We agree with M. Haralambos and M. Holborn on both the meaning and purpose of methodology. These scholars maintain that by methodology we refer to a systematic way of producing and analysing data so that the findings of the study may not be dismissed as guesswork or simply as common sense that has been mystified[98]. Our analysis goes beyond the written words in that it seeks to uncover also the general philosophies and cultural presuppositions upon which the pieces of data are based. Therefore, we follow those scholars who recognize three categories of methods, namely:

(a) methods which are used to collect data especially from the field;

(b) methods which are used to analyse data;

(c) methods which are used to test data in order to either reject or accept either some or all the conclusions of the study.[99]

Our study is a combination of field research and research that involves the analysis of texts especially the Bible. Therefore, we use a combination of methods from all three categories of methods without necessarily distinguishing which category a particular method comes from.

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[98] M. Haralambos, M. Holborn, *Sociology Themes and Perspectives (3rd Edition)* . London: Collins Educational, 1991. p. 698.

[99] *Ibid.*

Indeed, we take cognisance of the fact that most areas of methodology are riven by controversy and problems of the extent of applicability. For instance, anybody who assumes that one method can exhaust everything about a particular subject reaches a regrettable position. It is as such much our view as it is the view of the majority of scholars that no single method can be absolute. Each method has strengths and weakness. So, we use a number of methods and in such a way that they complement one another. We demonstrate this below as we outline briefly the methods used in this study.

Methods Used In This Study
Heuristics
An analysis of our objectives boils down to one to one basic conclusion. We investigate how the millenarian movements under study the Bible or biblical principles to respond deprivation. Therefore, first and foremost, our endeavour employs heuristics.

We suppose the term heuristics is derived from the Greek verb ευρισκω which when translated literally means "I find".[100] Therefore, R. P. Martin is probably correct when he views the word heuristics as a term that encompasses all the methods that are used to discover (find out) the sense of the passages of Scripture.[101]

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[100] J.W. Wenham, *Elements of New Testament Greek*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965. p. 193.

[101] R. P. Martin, "Approaches to New Testament Exegesis", in *New Testament Interpretation* ed. by I.H.Marshall. Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1977.p. 220.

However, classified under heuristics are some literalistic approaches that we dismiss outrightly. For example, the dogmatic and impressionistic approaches respectively and more so, literal criticism as a generic method. These we dismiss because of one major weakness, which is three-tier. First, the methods are basically synchronic particularly as they do not take cognisance of the meaning that was intended by the authors of the biblical passages for the audiences of their time. Second, but what is more serious as a weakness, with these approaches, it is quite possible for the interpreters to read into the biblical passages their own ideas which can be quite foreign to both the biblical writes and their audience. Third, but strictly related to the first two points, the message of the biblical passages is treated outside the historical context of the texts. Thus, the interpretation of the passages of scripture may be at the mercy of human feelings and imagination. Therefore, we opt for heuristic methods that are diachronic.

Indeed we are aware of a whole set of arguments, and perhaps a movement, against any diachronic reading of the text in favour of the synchronic ones, especially among American scholarship beginning from early 20th century to date. As we do not take the position of these scholars or movement for the reasons stated above we only summarize their major concerns.

T. S. Elliot and his associates were perhaps the earliest school of thought to launch the first decisive wave of attack against diachronic reading of the text and the school

of thought of M. Heidegger developed the attack[102]. Their point of entry, and what E. D. Hirsch calls their battleground was the literary criticism of poetry[103]. From this entry point this school of thought argued for the semantic autonomy of the text. The basic proposition was that textual meaning is independent of the author's control and this proposition was founded upon the literary doctrine that the best poetry is impersonal, objective and autonomous; that it leads an after life of its own, totally cut off from the life of its author[104]. Thus, when interpreting the text the author is irrelevant.

Other arguments that have been raised include: that the meaning of a text changes-even for the author; that it does not matter what the author means – only what his or her text says; that the author's meaning is inaccessible anyway and that the author often does not know what he means.

Hirsch has done a wonderful job to refute each one of these arguments carefully and in detail and therefore, it is not our intention to go over them but it is worth noting that he argues more or less in the same manner as we do above. It is worth noting two strictly related observations that Hirsch makes from his analysis of the development of literal criticism as a generic method. First, Hirsch observes as we have done above that the theory of the auton-

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[102] E. D. Hirsch, Jr., *Validity in Interpretation*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967. p. 1. However, for an appreciation of his arguments it is advisable to read the whole chapter.

[103] *Ibid.*

[104] *Ibid.*

omy of the text and hence, authorial irrelevance has frequently encouraged wilful arbitrariness and extravagance in academic criticism,[105] and we add, it has given the reader a lot of freedom at the expense of the author so much so that what we call the autonomy of the text is in fact the autonomy of the reader. What justification is there to grant such autonomy to the reader while at the same time denying the author the stage to determine the meaning of his or her own text? Further and what is more serious as a methodological flaw, we do end up with as many meanings of the text as we have readers on earth. This is related to Hirsch's second observation. Hirsch observed that:

> Once the author had been ruthlessly banished as the determiner of his text's meaning, it very gradually appeared that no adequate principle existed for judging the validity of an interpretation. By inner necessity the study of 'what a text says' became the study of what it says to an individual critic[106].

We cannot agree more with Hirsch especially as we take cognisance of the fact that the text we are dealing with here is not ordinary English poetry but the biblical text where the authors in more cases than one had a strong attachment to what they said as with what they said, they said either in a context of worship or some other cultic context that spoke meaningfully to their religiosity. Therefore, with the biblical text, the authors are quite relevant.

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[105] *Ibid.,* p. 2.
[106] *Ibid.,* p. 3.

Therefore, our heuristic is more of diachronic interpretation than synchronic. We understand the written documents within their historical context. As such, we employ exegesis as the over-arching method of analysis in all the chapters dealing with biblical texts.

Exegesis

By exegesis we mean a systematic interpretation of the text that employs such methods that generally constitute the Historical Critical Method[107]. The Historical Critical Method is taken as a composite method embracing all those methods, which either ask or imply historical questions. These, according to O. Kaiser and W. G. Kummel, include Textual Criticism, Literary and, or, Source Criticism, Form Criticism and Redaction Criticism,[108] to mention a few.

We use this term this way but taking cognisance of R. N. Soulen's word of caution and reservations concerning whether or not the Historical Critical Method can be as generic as we imply here. Soulen would view our use of the term Historical Critical Method not only as loose but also somewhat erroneous. For him the term is often used erroneously as synonymous with the whole body of methodologies related to the discipline of Biblical Criticism. Thus, Soulen either does not think the term is generic or has a problem concerning its use as a generic term en-

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[107] J. H. Hayes, C. R. Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis. A Beginner's Handbook (Revised Ed.)*. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1987.p. 23.

[108] O. Kaiser, W.G. Kummel, *Exegetical Method, A Student's Handbook*. New York: The Seabury Press, 1967. p. 69.

compassing all diachronic methods that fall under Biblical Criticism. The latter appears more likely because for him when the term is used as a generic term that is synonymous with Biblical Criticism, then it becomes erroneous in that certain critical methodologies that fall under Biblical Criticism do not claim to be historical in approach, for example, structuralism; while with others the issue is debated, for example, Form Criticism.[109] We treat Soulen's reservations broadly so as to include both the problems above.

We define the Historical Critical Method as we do following scholars like J. J. Keegan who see it as essentially a diachronic method that comprises such distinct methodologies we stated above[110]. The strength of using the term as a generic term is that we are able to use the methods as a composite without necessarily specifying them individually unless it is strictly necessary to do so. What could be Soulen's second problem becomes a problem if we take the Historical Critical Method to encompass both diachronic and synchronic approaches and whether or not we agree that such methodologies that analyse the structure of the text do not imply historical questions. As we argued earlier, we restrict the term Historical Critical Method to those methodologies that are diachronic in that they either explicitly raise or imply historical questions and we are clear concerning what we want to achieve by this method. We want to enjoy the benefit of producing

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[109] R.N. Soulen, *Handbook Of Biblical Criticism Second Edition.* Atlanta: John Knox Press, p. 88.

[110] E.D. Hirsch, *Op. Cit.*

valid results by, what Keegan refers to as, uncovering a great deal about the genetic sequence preceding the text itself[111].

We are also aware of the fact that each of these methods has its own assumptions, strengths and weaknesses. It is not our wish to get into the fine details of these aspects of the individual methods because we do not want to turn this dissertation into case studies of these methods. Rather, we argue that the assumptions, strengths and weaknesses of exegesis are an aggregate of the assumptions, strengths and weakness of the individual methods that comprise the exegetical method. We embrace the assumptions and strengths of exegesis and hence, the assumptions and strengths of the individual methods comprising the exegetical method. Below we state briefly these assumptions and strengths and where a particular strength is peculiar to a particular exegetical method, we become specific.

First, we endorse the assumption that when we exegete texts, we exegete written words and not oral ones, which implies that, as C. R. Holladay and J. H. Hayes correctly point out, the writer is not present as the reader reads the text.[112] Thus, the words themselves assume a greater importance than in a situation of oral communication. This point is of primary significance to us. It explains why we pay particular attention to, say, the nature of the words comprising the texts under study.

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[111]. *Ibid.*

[112]   J.H. Hayes, C.R. Holladay, *Op. Cit.*

Second, but strictly related to the above assumption, we are also aware that as interpreters of the texts we are in fact, third parties. Hayes and Holladay are probably correct when they view the Bible as specialized content whose forms of expression were produced in the world of the writer (first party) and were intended for the writers' audience (second party).[113] Both these parties lived much earlier than us, the interpreters of the Bible.

Thus, not only are the biblical texts composed in a different language and forms of expression different from ours, but also, they were composed in a different culture and historical context. Therefore, a cultural gap exists between the writer and his audience on one hand, and us, the interpreters of the Bible on the other hand. Similarly, a historical gap exists between the production of the biblical texts and the interpretation of these texts. Exegesis has been chosen as a method of analysing the texts particularly because it takes into account these dimensions.

Another strength of exegesis and therefore another rationale for choosing it as a method of analysis is that, the method takes into consideration the fact that the biblical texts are products of collective and historical growth.[114] The writes of the Bible frequently edited and combined older works, which, sometimes, were themselves already, edited and combined from earlier works. So, rather than perceiving the biblical authors simply as compilers and redactors of material we argue as redaction critics do that the authors were more than editors, they were actually

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[113] *Ibid.,* p. 8
[114] *Ibid.,* p. 11

authors in their own right. Meanwhile, as products of complex editorial processes, the biblical texts are perceived as containing layers of traditions. As such they are characterized by anachronisms, differences in style and contradictions not only in style but also content. Exegesis is the most appropriate method to deal with these through such exegetical tools like source and redaction critical methods.

However, this is not to say that exegesis is not without its weaknesses. The method has several weaknesses. For instance, we have already stated that as interpreters of the Bible we are third parties. Hence, both a cultural and historical gap exists between the writers of the texts and their intended audiences on one hand, and us, the interpreters of the Bible on the other hand. The problem with this is that as interpreters hence we fail to discern the meaning of text we may resort to our own presuppositions (to fill the gaps), which may not always be desirable. We try by all means to be as faithful as possible to the interpretation of the texts.

Second, the language of the text is not our language and probably not of the translator of the text. Language is not neutral. It carries with it the idioms and the cultural symbols of the author, which may not be easily discerned by the translator, let alone, the exegete.

Thus, the process of translation will always affect the originality of the text as that process may involve some interpretation. It is difficult to resolve this problem completely. However, we try to deal with this weakness of exegesis in a manner that is three-fold. First, as much as is possible we use the Revised Standard Version of the Bible

(hereinafter referred to as the RSV) which, as most biblical scholars agree in principle, represents one of the most accurate translations of the Bible so far. Second, we allow our knowledge of both biblical Hebrew and *Koine* Greek to inform our interpretation and, where necessary, render our own translation of the text where we feel we are not comfortable with the RSV's translation of the next. Finally, we endeavour to the utmost of our ability to dig deep into the socio-economic and political background of Palestine during the possible period of the production of the text so as to allow that background to inform our interpretation of the text. It is for this reason that we prefer diachronic interpretation to synchronic interpretation as it takes care of the above-mentioned problems.

To crown it all, we stated earlier that the major task and strength of exegesis is that it is concerned with the original meaning intended by the authors for the audiences of their time. We have an interest in this but our aim is broader than this. We investigate how the selected modern millenarian movements either use, or are informed by, the Biblical texts. Hence, we are not just concerned with the horizon of the biblical authors but also the horizon of the modern interpreter of the Bible. Thus, our effort seeks to bridge the gap between these two horizons. For this reason, exegesis is only a starting point in our overall analysis. We see our overall analysis as a hermeneutical task and therefore, we also employ biblical hermeneutics as a method of analysis.

Hermeneutics

The terms exegesis and hermeneutics have sometimes been used interchangeably as if they refer to one and the same thing. At other times exegesis is conceived of as part and parcel of hermeneutics. Thus, it has never been clear to us exactly what each of the two terms designates. For example, hermeneutics has been defined as a theory of interpretation of biblical texts; the formulation of rules or principles or methods of studying the text and these methods include Source Criticisms, Form Criticism, Redaction Criticism and Textual Criticism[115]. This definition is not at all different from the definition of exegesis which we gave above.

This is not the only definition where the two terms are used in vague terms to designate one and the same method. In other definitions, exegesis has been defined as the concrete explanation of sacred scripture using the principles of hermeneutics[116]. In other definitions, exegesis has been defined as the concrete explanation of sacred scripture using the principles of hermeneutics[117], while hermeneutics has been defined as a form of theological science that treats the principles of biblical interpretation[118]. Again these definitions are not at all different from the definition of exegesis that we gave above.

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[115] "Hermeneutics", in: *Harper's Bible Dictionary*. Ed. By P. J. Achtemeier, New York: Harper San Francisco, 1985. p. 384.

[116] *Ibid.*

[117] P. K. Meagher, *Dictionary of Religion*.

[118] P. K. Meagher, *Encyclopedia of Religion*.

It is apparent from the above that these definitions are not only vague but also confused. The confusion is not at once obvious. It becomes apparent when the definitions are extended to show the relationship between exegesis and hermeneutics[119].

These few examples are enough to demonstrate our point that these two terms have been used in ways that are vague and the relationship between them has never been stated quite clearly. Therefore, to help clarify our methodology, in this study we argue for a redefinition and clear delineation of the relationship between the two.

We maintain the definition of exegesis we gave above and proceed from that definition to define hermeneutics and in the process delineate the relationship between the two methods. Our definition of hermeneutics derives and proceeds from two factors namely: A. C. Thiselton's insights regarding the interpretation of texts, and some of the assumptions and weaknesses of exegesis stated earlier.

Thiselton views the interpretation of texts in terms of "horizons". By "horizon" Thiselton refers to the limits of thought dictated by a given perspective or viewpoint[120]. In the interpretation of texts this scholar envisages two horizons, namely: the horizon of the text, in particular, that of the writer and his intended audience, and, the horizon of the reader or interpreter of the text. It is in this context

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[119]   *Ibid.*

[120]   A. C. Thiselton, *The Two Horizons New Testament, Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description* Carlisle: The Paternoster Press, 1980. p. xix.

that we define hermeneutics and delineate its relationship with exegesis.

Earlier when we defined exegesis, we pointed out that one of the major strengths of exegesis is that it helps us to arrive at the meaning of the text that was intended by the author for the audience of his time. To cast this point in the language of Thiselton, exegesis helps us to establish as accurately as is possible, the horizon of the writer and his intended audience.

However, we have already stated that it is our theoretical assumption that the Bible is the fertile ground upon which the millenarian movements under study thrive. Therefore, our aim is to investigate how these movements interpret and find inspiration from the Bible. Thus, our endeavour does not exhaust itself with the horizon of the author and his intended audience only. The nature of our task dictates that we move from that horizon to the horizon of the interpreter.

In our view, this is where hermeneutics comes in. We define hermeneutics as a method of interpreting the Bible whose task is to bring about an active and meaningful engagement between the interpreter and the text in such a way that the interpreter's own horizon is reshaped and enlarged[121]. So, hermeneutics seeks to bridge both the cultural and historical gaps between the author and his intended audience on one hand, and the interpreter on the other hand. The method certainly has a synchronic dimension but it is different from the synchronic literal approaches we dismissed earlier in that hermeneutics

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[121]   *Ibid.*

proceeds from the results of exegesis, which is diachronic. It aims to apply the message of the author, already determined diachronically, in such a way that it speaks to the situation of the reader or interpreter of the text today. Therefore, in essence, hermeneutics helps us to avoid the methodological problem of jumping categories by applying various paradigms of historical and cultural relativity, which we discuss in detail in the relevant chapter later.

For now it suffices to mention that basically, ours is a hermeneutical task in that we examine how the millenarian movements under study are involved in an active engagement between themselves and the text, in particular, we examine how the millenarian's own horizon is reshaped and enlarged by the horizon of the biblical writers and their intended audiences.

Social-scientific Criticism

This method is usually taken as a branch of exegesis. However, in this study we define exegesis and hermeneutics before, and without mentioning, the social-scientific method for two strictly related reasons. First, we introduce certain refinements into the definition of this method and second, these refinements proceed from the definitions of exegesis and hermeneutics respectively.

Elliot defines Social-scientific Criticism as a phase of the exegetical task, which analyses the social and cultural dimensions of the text and of its environmental context through the utilization of the perspectives, theory, models and research of the social sciences.[122] Thus, for Elliot, it is

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[122]   *Ibid.*

a sub-discipline of exegesis that seeks to complement the other exegetical methods, all of which are designed to analyse specific aspects of the text.

Elliot is not alone in this presumption on methods. Holmberg correctly observes that Sociology or, as we call it here, Social-scientific Criticism, is not a new comer in New Testament studies[123]. Exegesis, in particular, the exegetical tool of Form Criticism assumes sociological analysis. As Holmberg maintains, the central idea of Social-scientific Criticism is drawn from Sociology of Literature and that is, types of literature or genres originate from, are bound to and are shaped by specific types of social setting (*Sitz-im-Leben*).[124]

Operating on this principle, a number of New Testament scholars like E. Meyer, A. Deissmann and E. Troeltsch, to mention a few, described and analysed how Christianity was in many ways connected to the social reality of its own world. Thus, ground was prepared for the use of Social-scientific Criticism in New Testament studies.

Of course, the natural continuation of the use of the method was not possible due to a fundamental shift in both the cultural and theological climate as a result of the Second World War. There was a paradigm shift from what Holmberg calls optimistic evolutionism and the liberal culture of Protestantism, to dialectic theology and

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123 J. Elliot, *Social Scientific Criticism of the New Testament*. London: SPCK, 1995 p. 7.

124 B. Holmberg, *Sociology and the New Testament An Appraisal*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990, p. 1.

existential biblical hermeneutics.[125] The former two approaches focused on society and culture, while the latter two focussed on theology and the individual. So, there was a paradigm shift from an interest on society and culture to theology and the individual[126].

This shift resulted in an unfortunate development in methodology. Methods like Form Criticism, which has the fecundity to explore the social reality of the biblical text unfortunately, developed a narrow focus. Form Criticism, for example, was directed into finding only the social basis of the gospels in the life and faith of the early church. Thus, *"Sitz-im-Leben"* became *"Sitz-im-religiösen-Leben"*.[127]

T. F. Best summarises the point neatly:

> ...even Form Criticism, with all its talk of *Sitz-im-Leben* ... of the text, was a literary and theological discipline which produced hardly any concrete historical, social, or economic information about the traditions it studied.[128]

The situation was made worse with the advent of Redaction Criticism as interest was turned toward the individual evangelist and his theology. The social life of the receiving community was therefore left far aside.[129]

This brief excursion into the historical development of the Social-scientific Criticism is not a digression from our

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[125] *Ibid.*

[126] *Ibid.*

[127] *Ibid.*

[128] T. F. Best, "The Sociological Study of the New Testament: Promise and Peril of a New Discipline", in *The Scottish Journal of Theology vol. 36.* 1983 p. 181.

[129] B. Holmberg, *Op. Cit.* p. 2.

main task. It serves to show exactly why Social-scientific Criticism had to develop as a necessity despite that there were earlier methods with a similar concern. Earlier we justified the use of this method but briefly. At this point, we take the opportunity to offer more strengths of the method and in greater detail.

Unlike all the previous exegetical methods with a social concern, Social-scientific Criticism complements the other exegetical tools in a very essential way. It studies the text as both a reflection and response to the social and cultural settings in which the text was produced, but what is more important, it aims to determine both the explicit and implicit meanings in the text that were made possible and shaped by the socio-cultural systems inhabited by both authors and their audiences.[130] Therefore, as Scroggs maintains, one strength of this method is that, along with every other scientific approach to scripture, the Social-scientific Criticism increases the awareness of the contexts of New Testament statements and hence, we come to see more and more what the New Testament said, what it meant in its own social context[131].

In our endeavour we do not end with exploring only the social dimension of the text. We explore also the social context of the millenarian movements under study as they find inspiration from and are guided by the social context of the biblical text. So, our interest is two-pronged.

It is in this light that we introduce certain refinements into the current understanding of Social-scientific Criti-

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130   J. Elliot, *Op. Cit.* p. 8.
131   R. Scroggs, *Op. Cit.* p. 85.

cism to take care of our two-pronged interest. Rather than referring to Social-scientific Criticism we talk about the social-scientific method comprising two complementary sub-methods, namely:

(a)   social-scientific exegesis, and
(b)   social-scientific hermeneutics.

We reserve the term social-scientific exegesis to refer to what Elliot calls Social-scientific Criticism and that is, a phase of the exegetical task which analyses the social and cultural dimension of the text and of its environmental context through the utilization of what Elliot refers to as the "perspectives, theory, models and research of the social sciences".[132] Specific models, perspectives or theories are pointed out in relevant chapters where we deal with specific texts.

However, as indicated earlier, our task is also hermeneutical. As such, we reserve the term social-scientific hermeneutics to refer to our second interest. We investigate how the two millenarian movements under study interact with "the horizon of the text" referred to earlier, and the result of this interaction especially how the millenarian's horizon is enlarged and reshaped by the horizon of the text. When we move from the social environment of the text to the social environment of the two modern millenarian movements in question ten we are deep into what we call social-scientific hermeneutics.

Although we discuss in detail later the various perspectives, underlying theories and models from the social sci-

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[132]   J. Elliot, *Op. Cit.* p. 7.

ences that we employ in our social-scientific hermeneutics, it is proper at this point to isolate two major ones. Among other paradigms mentioned earlier in our social-scientific hermeneutics we employ the social models or paradigms of millenarianism and relative deprivation respectively to analyse the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Johane Masowe.

As we discuss the point later, reference to relative deprivation should not be taken to imply an in-depth discussion of the relativity of deprivation. Rather, it is an attempt at caution and careful use of jargon. We intend to show that we are aware that deprivation is relative without necessarily getting into the depth of the debate on the relativity of deprivation.

Other important tools come specifically from the Sociology of Knowledge, namely the social principle of "image" and "conceptual metaphor". We expand on this branch of Sociology and show our understanding of these tools from it in the relevant chapter later. For now it suffices only to mention that it is our conviction that these tools from the social sciences help to increase the penetrative fecundity of our analysis and therefore, give the thesis the sort of mileage we expect.

Indeed, we are aware of the weaknesses, especially, the dangers of our method and particularly the major fears that have been arrayed regarding the discipline of sociology in general. For example, it has often been observed that exegetes using the social sciences will allow everything, especially theological beliefs to be reduced, in

Durkheimian fashion, to social phenomena.[133] Further, in using the social sciences, exegetes, like the sociologists, of necessity must bracket out and exclude "the God Hypothesis" and thus, the exegetical task become agnostic if not atheistic.[134]

We agree with Elliot that there is nothing inherent in the method itself that makes it reductionistic.[135] A lot depends on the interpretative assumptions, which the exegete brings into the interpretative task. In our study of the social phenomena we exclude from our methodology judgements about the possibility of revelation or validity of theological beliefs concerning the existence and nature of God and such phenomena as demons and miracles. Our attention focuses on the social conditions, capacities, and consequences, of such beliefs without raising truth or validity questions regarding them. Hence, the assumption that we bring into interpretative endeavour is one which many scientists hold that the beliefs are real in their social consequences and it is this that we are interested in understanding and explaining.[136]

We have already hinted that our major focus is on the doctrine of the millenarian. One of our objectives is to examine how the apocalyptic thought of the millenarian does form the core of the millenarian cosmology and how that becomes the basis for social action. Our methodology

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[133]   *Ibid.*
[134]   *Ibid.*
[135]   *Ibid.*
[136]   *Ibid.*

can allow us to do this without questioning whether the apocalyptic beliefs are valid or invalid, true or false.

However, Scroggs points out a further limitation of the social-scientific exegesis. As the method increases the awareness of the conceptualisms of the New Testament statements, it inevitably makes it obvious that those statements cannot be claimed to be revelatory for other social contexts, that, for all times and situations.[137] We are certainly aware of this problem of the tension that the exegetical task introduces in our overall interpretative endeavour. However, it is in the light of this problem that our rationale to introduce some refinements into the definition, assumptions and application of social-scientific becomes clearer and stronger.

The limitation of social-scientific exegesis is taken care of by utilizing what we are referring to as social-scientific hermeneutics. To avoid the danger of jumping categories which Scroggs points out above, we employ our social scientific hermeneutics that utilizes several social paradigms of cultural relativity.

Although we discuss these paradigms in a later chapter, it is vital for clarity to point out that our social-scientific hermeneutics tends to thrive on the type of thinking implied in the paradigm of cultural relativity suggested by scholars like Barr which reconcile with such extreme positions like that of D. E. Nineham. With a lot of qualification, we maintain that it is possible for one to speak for posterity. Hence, our hermeneutics broadens our interpretative horizon to allow the view that the biblical state-

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[137]   *Ibid.*

ments are indeed revelatory for all times and situations in a manner that we explain later.

Therefore, the social-scientific method we propose here helps us to do two things, first, to study the text in its own historical, social context and second, to study how the biblical message is interpreted and applied by the modern millenarian movements to their social context.

Methods of Collecting and Analysing Data from the Field

Types of Survey Designs and our Choice of a Survey Design

This is one phase of the research project which we regard very dearly because, while the kind of field work we carry out here is not full blown as our conclusions are not based entirely on results from the field, we are cognizant of the fact that our study may stand or fall depending on how we conduct this part of the project. We concur with Oppenheim that no amount of sophisticated scale-building and, or, statistical analysis can rescue a research project in which the conceptualisation and instrumentation have been built on poorly conducted field research, especially poorly conducted exploratory interviews.[138] In this section and later in other relevant sections of the dissertation, we describe some of the extra precautions which we took as we used particular methods of collecting and analysing data from the field.

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[138] A. N. Oppenheim,. *Questionnaire Design, Interviewing and Attitude Measurement. New Edition.* London: Pinter Publishers, 1992, p. 65.

The methods of collecting and analysing data from the field are determined largely by our survey design. We recognize, as others have done, two types of survey designs namely:

(a)   descriptive survey designs
(b)   analytical survey designs.

A Descriptive survey design is a study whose basic aim is to tell us how many (what proportion of) members of a population have a certain opinion or characteristic or how often certain events occur together and, or, are associated with each other.[139]Thus, a descriptive survey is basically enumerative and descriptive.

An Analytic survey design is a study that is set up to explore specific hypothesis that have to do with associations between particular variables.[140]As such, it is less oriented towards representativeness and more finding associations and explanations, less towards descriptions and enumeration and more towards prediction.[141]Thus, an Analytic survey design is essentially heuristic.

Our study is a combination of the two of designs. It is typically an Analytic survey design that utilizes some tools and results from Descriptive survey designs. While we utilize mostly descriptions that we ourselves collected, at times we make use of already collected data from other sources. We argue that these two types of types of survey designs necessarily work hand–in glove. The Descriptive

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139   *Ibid.*, p. 12.
140   *Ibid.*, p. 12.
141   *Ibid.*

survey is important to us in that it essentially fact-finding and descriptive. The information from the Descriptive survey design when compared with the result from similar surveys at different places and times, may betray a trend, which then makes us want to go further than the descriptive survey. Thus, questions of "how many "do lead to question about "why". Oppenheim is right that usually we then move from a Descriptive survey design to an Analytic survey design.[142]

As we show in the literature review, a comparison of facts from various Descriptive surveys from different places and times, betrays a particular trend and that is, there appears to be a strict relationship between millenarianism and deprivation. From these results we have been tempted to go further than this description to analyse the causal relationship between these two phenomena.

We utilize some key concepts and skills of descriptive survey designs to gather facts about two modern millenarian movements in Zimbabwe namely the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Johane Masowe. The facts and descriptions of these two movements are compared to results from similar surveys on biblical millenarian movements conducted at different times in a bid to verify the trend mentioned earlier. This part of the study is largely descriptive and enumerative. This way, our endeavour is a Descriptive survey design. However, we go further than this to show and explain the casual relationship between

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[142] *Ibid.,* p. 13.

two variables namely, millenarianism and deprivation. This way, our endeavour is an Analytic survey design.

Scholars who specialize in studies of field techniques say more about models of causality and describe and explain more concepts entailed in Descriptive survey designs. In this section on methodology, it suffices to isolate only a few concepts from the two types of designs so as to clarify what we have been, and are, doing in this study.

From Analytic survey designs we isolate for discussion here the concept of "variables" and from Descriptive survey designs, the concepts of "population" and "sample" respectively.

Analytic Survey Design and the Concept of Variables

We have already stated the two variables under study but we need now to put them into some form of context. We do recognize the four types of variables identified by most social scientists namely experimental variables, dependent variables, controlled variables, and uncontrolled variables.

Experimental variables are often referred to as independent or explanatory variables and these are the "causes" or "predictors", the effects of which are being studied.[143] Our hypothesis is centred on the various millenarian beliefs of the Jehovah's Witnesses and Johane Masowe, how they derive or find inspiration from certain biblical beliefs and how they relate to deprivation. Therefore, our primary explanatory variables are three, namely isolated biblical beliefs that are stated later, the millenarian beliefs of the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Johane

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[143]   *Ibid.,* p. 21.

Masowe, and relative deprivation. Our design is set up to investigate how these variables are working, in what combinations and why.

Dependent variables are often referred to as effects variables and these are the predicted outcomes, results or effects produced by the explanatory variables.[144] Our thesis is that in as much as the millenarian movements under study have developed external structures to respond to various stimuli of deprivation, they have also developed internal structures i.e. beliefs or doctrines to respond to or deal with various forms of deprivation. These internal structures are our dependent variables. We become more specific than this in the relevant chapter.

Controlled variables are sources of variation.[145] Depending on the nature of the controlled variables, we have either eliminated or controlled the variables by exclusion, or holding them constant, or randomisation. We show how we dealt with the controlled variables when we discuss the impact or effects of the explanatory variables.

Finally, uncontrolled variables are free-floating variables, which theoretically are of two kinds namely confounded variables and error variables[146]. Confounded variables are often called correlated biases.[147] These are variables other than experimental or controlled variables but are somehow confounded within these two sets of variables. They could be considered as hidden additional

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144   *Ibid.*
145   *Ibid.*
146   *Ibid.*
147   *Ibid.*

causes that can either affect the results and hence, produce serious misinterpretations or lead to the development of new hypotheses so that, eventually, their impact may be controlled.

When carrying out field research among one of the Johane Masowe groups, that is the Johane Masowe VeChishanu, two variables were noted which have the potential to become confounded variables. First, the Johane Masowe's reluctance to allow equipment such as tape recorders and cameras at their gatherings is one variable whose impact on the results is not yet certain. Second, some respondents had some characteristic enthusiasm, which as we noted later emanated from their conception that they could get sponsorship if the results of the research were published. Once again, we are not certain what the impact of this variable on the results may be. Of course, as may be evident above, it may not be possible to distinguish between confounded variables and pure error. We take care to make as small as possible the influence of this variable.

Descriptive Survey Design and the Concepts of Population and Sample

We agree with Oppenheim that the key issue in designing a descriptive study is the relationship between a "sample" and its "population".[148] The concept "population" is taken to denote all those who fall into the category of concern and a "sample" being a smaller group, usually but not

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[148]   *Ibid.,* p. 38.

always a representative one, within a population.[149] Indeed for us to state the relationship between a sample and its parent population, we need to describe the two in terms of characteristics, which are common to both of them. Thus, we have to have a "sampling frame". By sampling frame" we refer to the size and demographic characteristics of the parent population.[150]

The Jehovah's Witnesses in Zimbabwe are a large, nation-wide sampling frame because say, their membership is known; they have definite activities and documents to refer to. The Johane Masowe are not exactly the same. As stated in the literature review, broadly speaking, there are three major groups of the Johane Masowe, one in Bulawayo, the other in Seke and the third one in Zimunya in Mutare. These are the broad groups, which do have known similarities and differences. That way they may be regarded as sampling frames. However, it is difficult to know their membership for some reasons stated later. Further, some of their activities are secret and highly symbolic. As such, we employ a different technique for sampling, which we define and evaluate as appropriate in terms of the needs of our study. We outline these in relevant sections and we produce a rationale for our sampling frames techniques below.

For the Jehovah's Witnesses we depended mostly on representative samples. In other words, we interviewed and observed fewer people who, together, could give us an accurate picture of what would have emerged from a

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149   *Ibid.*
150   *Ibid.*

study of an entire population of many millions. This is what Opennheim correctly refers to as a study of the nation in microcosm.[151]

Precautions have been taken to ensure that there is an exact correspondence between the sample characteristics and the population attributes by making sure that when drawing the samples, each member of the population had a statistically equal chance of being selected. This has been ensured primarily by a completely random sampling method.

Of course, randomness here does not denote some sort of arbitrary process. Rather, it involves a table or set of random numbers that aims at producing a sampling fraction (that is, if a survey sample of 25 out of a population of 100 people is required then the sampling fraction is 4. This means selecting randomly one name in 4 people). This is what is referred to as a simple random sample.

We did not use the simple random sampling method because of the expenses that may arise from the practical considerations related to geographical location of our respondents. We preferred the cluster random sampling method to the simple sampling method. We took advantage of the fact that both the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Johane Masowe are clustered or structured and distributed in some way. The Jehovah's Witnesses are clustered in the various cities in Zimbabwe while the Johane Masowe are clustered into the three major groups partly because those are the areas where they were settled historically and also these are areas with the market for their

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goods. Randomness as a principle was applied to each cluster.

For speed and low costs we also used the quota sampling method. A quota is a cell within the overall sample, designed to have the same socio-demographic characteristics as its population, which can then be assigned to an interviewer or group of interviewees.[152] This was particularly very helpful with regard to interviewing the Johane Masowe in Mutare who are now quite wide spread in Manicaland but remain a united group in that wherever they are in their small groups they maintain the same structures and beliefs as the parent population. The technique was also useful with the Jehovah's Witnesses who despite their widespread distribution maintain almost the same structures and beliefs as the parent population not only in Zimbabwe but even outside Zimbabwe.

However, regarding the Johane Masowe VeChishanu in Seke a different technique and samples were used. It was difficult to use representative samples because, in the first place, it was difficult to arrive at a sampling frame. Several demographic characteristics of the parent population are not known. For instance, the population size is not definite. While there is Nzira who, from the look of it, is the supposed leader of the congregation, in his sermons, Nzira denies he is the leader. There are some people with titles that are obviously connected to the overall leadership structures of the group, for example, vaMiriri veMweya (These, we guess, are the equivalent of the Sisters among the Johane Masowe in Mutare) but the exact

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152   *Ibid.,* p. 41.

relationship of these supposed leaders and their exact positions in the leadership structure remain a mystery. Further, they have no documents to refer to as they do not read the Bible and do not write. Thus, the Johane Masowe in Seke cannot be regarded as a sampling frame in the manner that we described above, as is the case with the Johane Masowe in Mutare.

While few people from among the group in Seke were isolated and interviewed they cannot be regarded as a representative sample in that we cannot define their relationship to their parent population since some key demographic characteristics of the parent population are not known. In this case we used the snowballing technique and judgement samples.

The snowballing technique is used where there is no sampling frame, that is, when dealing with populations with unknown characteristics or no accurate parameters but still desiring to arrive at a certain degree of representatives in our sample.[153] The technique involves using personal contacts to build up a sample of the group to be studied.[154] A few appropriate individuals were located and these led us to other contacts that did fit the sampling requirements. While it is difficult to know how accurately the population of concern was represented, as wide a spread of individuals as possible was obtained through repeating this approach several times. What we used therefore were not representative samples but judgement samples. As much as possible we also participated in the

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[153]   *Ibid.,* p. 43.
[154]   M. Haralambos, M. Holborn, *Op. Cit.* p. 725.

services at their main shrine in Seke and made as many observations as possible that we documented as ethnographic notes. We attach as an appendix a sample of these especially those that we make reference to in the dissertation itself. For reasons we state later in the appropriate chapter, Snowballing was also applied on the Jehovah's Witnesses but to a limited extent.

Once the samples were determined, data was collected through exploratory interviews and as we state above, participant observations. At this point it is essential to make some clarifications and ramifications.

We preferred explanatory interviews to standardized interviews because of the obvious reason that our task is essentially heuristic, to develop ideas and research hypotheses and not just to gather facts and statistics (which is the major task of a standardized interview). We seek to understand how the Jehovah's Witnesses and Johane Masowe think and feel about the topics or subjects of concern to our research. Therefore, our interviews would not be standard. Contrary to what we have been saying all along, our job as interviewers was thus not that of data collection but ideas collection (if there is such a thing). Our interviews were primarily free-style, the objectives being to maintain spontaneity and to allow the respondents to come out with seemingly irrational ideas, hatreds or misconceptions to use Oppenheim's words[155], which we would then interpret.

While some interviews were recorded on tape for detailed analysis later it was not possible to do this with the

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[155]   A. N. Oppenheim, *Op. Cit.* p. 67.

Johane Masowe VeChishanu in Seke who did not allow cameras and tape recorders in their campground. Most ideas recorded concerning this group were through participant observation and interviews of personal contacts who were interviewed briefly before main services at the campground and at their homes after services.

CHAPTER 2: DEFINITION OF TERMS AND THE HISTORICAL ORIGINS OF MILLENARIANISM FROM ISRAELITE PROPHECY

Preliminary Remarks

Two considerations, ensuing from D. Hanson and I Copi respectively, determine the content and orientation of this chapter. Copi's insights concern definitions of terms and Hanson's concern the relationship between millenarianism and Old Testament prophecy, concerns that are key to this study. We begin by defining key terms being guided by Copi's insights and then offer a detailed exegetical survey of selected Old Testament prophetic books in a bid to show the historical origins of millenarianism from Old Testament prophecy and also that deprivation was the context within which millenarianism originated, taking Hanson's insights as a guide.

Copi's Insights and Rationale for defining our Terms

In his introductory remarks of a chapter dealing with definitions, Copi discusses some valuable insights about language, which we consider very important for this chapter, and therefore we adopt almost all of them. First, he validly that language is the principal tool for human communication.[156] However, his second insight is more vital to us and that is, when words are used carelessly or mistakenly, what was intended to advance mutual under-

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[156]   I. Copi, *Introduction to Logic Sixth Edition*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1982. p. 162.

standing may in fact hinder it, our instrument thus becomes our burden[157].

Copi does not leave us in the dark concerning how our principal tool of communication might become our burden. This, according to him, can happen when words used in a discussion are ambiguous, or excessively vague, or imprecise, or emotionally loaded[158]. While controversies often involve more than words, such mistaken use of language largely contributes to disputes that are either prolonged or completely unresolved.

Copi isolates three different types of disputes, which must be distinguished. The first is the obviously genuine dispute in which the parties involved in the dispute explicitly and unambiguously disagree either in attitude or in belief[159]. In other words, there is no ambiguity present in their use of terms but rather, either their judgement of facts or, their attitude towards the facts, may be in conflict. Thus, this is in fact, a genuine dispute.

The second type of dispute is the merely verbal dispute, where the presence of an ambiguous key term in the disputants' formulations of their beliefs or convictions conceals the fact that there is no real disagreement between them[160]. The dispute is arising due to ambiguity that is present in the disputants' use of terms. This is, in Copi's view, not a genuine disagreement.

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[157] *Ibid.*
[158] *Ibid.*
[159] *Ibid.,* p. 168.
[160] *Ibid.,* p. 166.

The third type of dispute is the apparently verbal dispute that is really genuine[161]. In this kind of dispute that is ambiguity in the disputants' use of terms and the disputants disagree in attitude or in belief. These insights from Copi are valuable to us in this chapter. In this chapter we begin by defining what we consider as key terms to avoid a number of things, which, if left unattended, may effectively weaken our argument.

First, we endeavour to eliminate ambiguity by using two types of definitions commonly used for this purpose, namely lexical and stipulative definitions respectively. In this regard, we are dedicated to the proposition that by exposing and eliminating ambiguities, definitions can effectively resolve disputes that are merely verbal and hence, not genuine. So, we ensure as much as is possible that, after offering our conclusion, if we remain in dispute then our disagreement is genuine in that it rests solely on conflict in attitude or belief, either about facts or about criteria for the application of some principles.

Second, we attempt eliminating vagueness by using précising definitions. Here the basic assumption is that ambiguity and vagueness are quite different. We agree with many who content that a term is ambiguous in a given context when it has more that one distinct meaning and the context does not make clear which meaning is intended, and that a term is vague when there exists "borderline cases", so that it cannot be determined whether the term should apply to them or not[162]. To eliminate

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161   *Ibid.*, p. 167.
162   *Ibid.,* p. 173.

vagueness therefore, we use definitions that can help decide on borderline cases by transcending the ordinary, or report of normal, usage of the terms. Such a definition may be called a précising definition[163].

Third, we avoid a whole set of definitions that are referred to as persuasive definitions; definitions that are formulated and used persuasively, to resolve disputes by influencing the attitudes, or stirring the emotions, of the readers[164]. We avoid such definitions, as they tend to push us into bad reasoning by tempting us to inject into our language subtle manipulation and emotive coloration. In the end it may be difficult to ascertain exactly the grounds for either agreement or dispute.

To crown it all, as we define terms we take cognisance of the fact that in our endeavour there is more than ambiguity, precision and emotive coloration at stake. We seek also a comprehensive understanding of concepts entailed in the terms. So, we broaden our definitions into theoretical ones. We follow the majority of logicians who define a theoretical definition of a term as a definition that attempts to formulate a theoretically adequate or scientifically useful description of the objects to which the term applies[165]. Further, we are also cognisant of the underlying assumption that to propose a theoretical definition is tantamount to the acceptance of theory.

Certainly, it is not our intention to make these definitions fixed, nor do we define the terms for posterity. We

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[163]   *Ibid.,* p. 174.
[164]   *Ibid.,* p. 176.
[165]   *Ibid.*

know that as our knowledge and understanding of the subject in question increase, others may replace some of our theoretical definitions

Hanson's Insights and the Rationale for exegeting selected Old Testament Texts

The Second part of this chapter comprises a detailed exegetical discussion of selected Old Testament books, which as argued earlier, are antecedent to the book of revelation and thus possible sources from where the book of Revelation draws some insight.

Concerning the old Testament pieces of literature, in particular, we are aware of the argument by some reputable scholars like G. Von Rad that there is no essential connection between prophecy and apocalyptic[166], a connection which is the basic assumption of this study. These scholars see the rise of apocalyptic in the second century BC especially with Daniel. Even though the presence of the book of Daniel within the Hebrew canon militates against their view, these scholars in fact argue that Daniel should not be regarded as part of Hebrew canon but as part of Inter-testament literature[167]. We take this placement of Daniel as Inter-testament literature into consideration and indeed discuss the book in a separate chapter but for reasons different from von Rad's assertion above.

We regard von Rad's view as an old notion that misses one crucial point, which Hanson expresses very well.

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[166] G. Von Rad., *Old Testament Theology Volume 2* New York: Harper and Row, 1965., p. 201ff.

[167] *Ibid.*

Hanson correctly argues that the rise of apocalyptic eschatology is neither sudden nor anomalous, but follows the pattern of an unbroken development from pre-exilic and exilic prophecy[168]. Hanson's argument is appealing to us especially when it agrees with the generally accepted notion that the development of ideas is not all of a sudden. Thus, the apocalyptic literature of the second century and after is a result of a long development reaching back to pre-exilic times and beyond, and not a new baby of second century foreign parents[169]. We are convinced, just as Hanson is, that both the sources of origin and the intrinsic nature of late apocalyptic composition can be understood by tracing the centuries-long development through the apocalyptic and other even more archaic native roots[170].

Therefore, in this chapter we do not hesitate to look at Old Testament literature as we seek to vindicate Hanson and ourselves in a two-fold manner. First, we utilize all kinds of definitions discussed earlier to avoid inauthentic disputes and to take advantage of the strengths of each definition so as to strengthen our argument thereby gaining the sort of mileage we expect. Second, as Hanson puts it, we temper our enthusiasm with an appeal for rigorous application of the Historical Critical Method as corrective to the types of errors that some modern approaches, which ignore the historical context of the texts, can de-

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[168] P.D. Hanson, *The Dawn Of The Apocalyptic The Historical And Sociological Roots Of Jewish Apocalyptic* Philadelphia; Fortress Press, 1979. p. 6.

[169] *Ibid.*

[170] *Ibid.*

liver[171] bearing in mind though the weaknesses of exegesis stated earlier under methodology.

Definition of key terms
Definitions and the Concept of Symbols
In order for us to proceed smoothly with our definitions it is contingent at this juncture to introduce pieces of jargon which recur throughout the definitions and which are useful to us in so far as each of the terms says clearly in very few words what is normally said in many words. It is particularly necessary to introduce these terms because of one conviction which Copi, once again outlines clearly in quite a condensed manner. The conviction is that, definitions explain meaning of symbols and therefore, definitions are always definitions of symbols[172]. Hence, it is logical to infer that we use symbols to explain the meanings of other symbols.

The two pieces of jargon that are useful in our endeavour to define terms are *definiendum*, which is the symbol being defined and, definiens, which is the symbol or group of symbols being used to explain the meaning of the *definiendum*. It may be apparent from this that we do not necessarily imply that the *definiens* is the same as the *definiendum*. Rather, the *definiens* is the symbols or group of symbols that has the same meaning as the *definiendum*.

This remark is significant because technically, it may be difficult to draw dividing lines among most of the terms defined below. However, what is more important is

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[171]   *Ibid.*
[172]   I. Copi, *Op.Cit* p. 169.

that the pieces of jargon are useful in our effort to resolve in our own way a difficulty in defining millenarianism, which some critics of comparative millenarian studies raise incessantly.

Some critics of comparative millenarian studies have objected that there are so many varieties of millenarian movements that to make generalizations about them is a hazardous enterprise[173]. The problem in this regard is that as D.C. Allisons puts it, we have some difficulty defining "Millenarianism" particularly if by it we mean listing characteristics that invariably belong to it[174].

This difficulty is neither unique to us nor is it unique to the definition of millenarianism. This difficulty is faced everywhere and at any time when a common noun is defined in a way that fits all such common nouns. In our case the difficulty arises when for instance, we try to define one millenarian movement in a way that fits all millenarian movements. For instance, we are aware that the two millenarian movements under study are characterised using the same common noun, "millenarian movements", but this should not be constructed to mean that that common noun encompasses a list of all the characteristics that invariably belong to both.

When outlining the difficulty associated with defining religion in a way that fits all religions, Wittgenstein correctly observed, that all we can do in this regard is to draw up a list of " family characteristics", things that tend to

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[173]   D.C, Allisons, *Jesus of Nazareth Millenarian Prophet,* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998 p. 80.
[174]   *Ibid.*

recur but may be absent from this or that instance of "religion"[175]. We can only talk of "a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss – crossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail"[176].

It can appear bizarre for one to refer, as we do in this study, to two morphologically different religious groups, the Jehovah's witnesses and Johane Masowe, using one common noun, "millenarian movements". We attempt to make some sense in this as we refine Wittgenstein's observation by utilizing the two pieces of jargon stated above. We refer to the common noun as the *definiendum* and we find the term *definiens* appropriate to refer to what Wittgenstein calls" Characteristics" or the "network of similarities".

Our refinement of Wittgenstein's observation has the advantage of enriching and expanding the meaning of the concept of "similarities" in that when we talk about "symbols" we do not necessarily limit "similarities" to form or morphology. Rather, we extend the conception to include "similarities" in terms of the meanings of the symbols even though morphologically the symbols may be different. This gives us the elasticity and free-play which we require to make the necessary generalizations about the many varieties of millenarian movements from various times and diverse places. Therefore, such efforts at analysing the Jehovah's witnesses and the Johane Masowe together become understandable. We are of the conviction

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[175] Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations: The English Text of the Third Edition 2nd Ed* New York: Macmillan, 1958, p. 31.

[176] *Ibid.,* p. 32.

that the *definiendum* millenarianism can be understood much more clearly in the light of the meanings of eschatology and apocalypticism respectively.

Eschatology, Apocalypticism and their relationship to Millenarianism

In an earlier work we dealt at length with the *definiendum* eschatology and the *definiendum* apocalypticism[177]. In this earlier work we argued that there is lack of clarity in terms of the meanings and hence, use of the two terms and this is perhaps due to the fact that the *definiens* used to define each of the terms are not clearly defined and an overlap exists that leaves some ambiguity in their use. For this reason we went into finer and more refreshed details of the definitions of these two terms. In this dissertation we do not repeat that detailed discussion. Rather, we pick specific items that relate particularly to grey areas in the books of the Old Testament and Revelation respectively and the movements under study. With the book of Revelation particularly, we pick those areas of definition, which in the relevant chapter on the book we shall only assume.

A survey of the discussions of the subjects of eschatology and apocalypticism shows that the majority of scholars use the two terms interchangeably. For example, D.E.H. Whiteley maintains that Pauline thought structure

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[177] The argument was presented in chapter one of an MA dissertation presented to the University of Zimbabwe's Department of Religious Studies Classics and Philosophy entitled *Paul The Apocalyptic Christian Theologian*.

is eschatological[178]. This school either think there is no distinction between the two terms or if it is there then that the distinction is tissue thin.

This perspective is not just a characteristic of earlier scholars in the 60's and 70's but even recent scholars, as recent as 1999 and even 2000 to a certain extent. Two or three examples of scholars published in 1999 suffice to demonstrate our point. A scholar who quickly comes to mind is A.Y. Collins, who, although her works have been met with mixed reactions, qualifies to be regarded as an established scholar in contemporary times interested in phenomena that other scholars are not so confident to discuss. We take interest in her work, *Cosmology and Eschatology in Jewish and Christian Apocalypticism*. From the title of the work one immediately expects a clear delimitation of the terms Eschatology and Apocalypticism so as to arrive at the position and role of Eschatology in Jewish and Christian Apocalypticism. None of the chapters makes even the slightest attempt to take this crucial step in the exposition of this subject matter. Even chapter one in which the author deals with methodological issues, the question of historiography and hermeneutics in connection with ancient apocalyptic literature, avoids this crucial methodological step.

A recently published three-volume *Encyclopaedia of Apocalypticism* (1999) provides more examples of scholars in this regard. We discuss most of them in the second segment of this chapter and therefore, we pick only two of

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178   E.H. Whiteley, *Theology of Saint Paul* Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1964. p. 233.

them. After a careful study of the Dead Sea Scrolls, G. Martinez describes the " Apocalypticism" that comes out of the scrolls as" "Jewishly eschatological". J. Collins, in the same Encyclopaedia, has several expositions of texts that uncover Jewish Apocalypticism and in those expositions he discusses examples of Jewish eschatology without necessarily distinguishing between the two.

This lack of clarity results in merely verbal disputes arising due to ambiguity in our use of terms. We are satisfied with how we dealt with the grey areas within the definitions of the two in the earlier work we referred to above. Briefly, we hold that the *definiendum* eschatology refers to all the *definienses* that depict the last things or the ultimate destiny of humankind and the present aeon. The *definiendum* apocalypticism however, comprises *definienses* that depict the last things (eschatology), but it also includes necessarily *definiens* in the present aeon that anticipates the final consummation of history and the final end of the present aeon. Therefore, the *definiendum* apocalypticism is characterised by dualism in that components of the old and new aeons respectively overlap and continue in human history towards the end or final consummation. What concerns us more is the refinement we would like to make on the *definiendum* apocalypticism in the light of the debate on the literary genre of the book of Revelation. It is in this context that we define the two terms.

When trying to arrive at the literary genre of the book of Revelation scholars have engaged in a serious dispute arising from Hanson's attempted distinction between apocalypse, apocalyptic genre, apocalyptic eschatology and

apocalyptic movement[179]. In this dispute some scholars would want to see the book of Revelation as standing apart from Jewish apocalyptic literature[180]. Thus, it becomes inevitable to define our terms.

Almost all contemporary New Testament scholars agree in principle that the literary genre of the book of Revelation is apocalypse. So, points of dispute must lie somewhere else since even the author himself does identify his work as an apocalypse.

The term apocalypse is derived from the Greek noun αποκαλυψις. The noun is derived from the verb αποκαλῦπιω, which means, "I reveal" or "I disclose"[181]. Therefore we may take the noun αποκαλυψις to mean "revelation" or "disclosure". Other translators have translated the terms to mean, "unveiling" or "lifting of a veil"[182].

However, scholars often use the terms "apocalyptic" and "apocalyptic writings" in place of apocalypse introducing yet a new set of grey areas in the use of the terms. A whole debate ensued especially from among a group of scholars belonging to the Society of Biblical Literature concerning a clear distinction between the conceptions "apocalyptic", "apocalypticism" and "apocalypse" respec-

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[179] P.B. Decock, "Scriptures in the Book of Revelation" in *Neotestamentica Journal of the New Testament Society of South Africa, 33(2),* 1999. p. 374.

[180] *Ibid.*

[181] B.M. Newman, *A Concise English Dictionary of the New Testament* D-Stuttgart: DeutscheBibelgesellschaft, 1994. p. 21.

[182] See also David A. De Silva, *An Introduction to the New Testament Contexts Methods and Ministry Formation* Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2004. p. 887.

tively. This debate probably arose, from Hanson's distinction between apocalyptic or apocalypse as genre, apocalyptic eschatology and apocalyptic movement. This is the debate we pick up now because we think this is the appropriate point as we seek not only to clarify terms we have been using all along and remaining silent about what we mean exactly by using them but also to provide hints to the necessary link between succeeding chapters. We are not interested in the entire history of the debate but certain fine details that selected scholars provided in the course of the debate.

P.B. Decock does a very good job to summarise the debate highlighting some critical issues in the exegetical literature of the last ten years. In particular he gives an overview of, among other key issues, whether or not apocalyptic is a literary genre or theological concept; eschatological or cosmological in content and what is more important to us, he goes at length discussing apocalyptic movements identifying their social context and function as well as discussing Jesus, Q and apocalyptic traditions and how these relate to the book of Revelation[183]. From this overview we note several critical issues of debate about which we take a position that not only clarifies our terms but also our conception and the kind of direction we are taking.

We agree with J.A. Du Rand that from this debate there is need to distinguish between apocalyptic as a phenome-

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[183] P.B. Decock, "Some Issues In Apocalyptic in the Exegetical Literature Of The Past Ten Years," in *Neotestamentica 33 (1)* 1999. pp. 1-33.

non or mental content and the system or historical movement known as apocalypticism[184]. This appears to be a follow-up to Hanson's article of 1976 that called for a three-tier distinction between apocalyptic genre (apocalypse), apocalyptic eschatology, and apocalyptic movements (apocalypticism)[185] and debate rages on concerning the weight to be given to each of these and the exact relationship between these three[186]. We agree with those scholars who restrict the term apocalypse to the genre or type of literature with a narrative framework in which a message from a deity is revealed or mediated by an other worldly being say, an angel, to a human recipient who is a famous figure commonly viewed as a seer or prophet, and this revelation comes in a situation of crisis and rapid change[187].

Thus, apocalypses, as De Silva puts it, paint the cosmic backdrop of the everyday realities of the audience and place them under the interpretative light of that cosmic backdrop[188]. The major task and significance of the seer or prophet is to place the audience's time within the context of a sacred history of God's activity and a carefully defined plan and also to place the audience's location on earth within the context of the invisible world[189]. It is from this larger context that an apocalypse derives its

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[184] J.A. du Rand, "Revelation," in *Guide to the New Testament VI* Ed. By A.B. du Toit. Pretoria: NGKB., 1993. p. 227.

[185] *Ibid.*

[186] Decock, *Op. Cit.*, p. 2.

[187] J.A. du Rand, *Op. Cit.*, p. 229.

[188] De Silva, *Op. Cit.*, p. 888.

[189] *Ibid.*

power to comfort those who are discouraged in their situation, admonish those whose responses to everyday life are not in line with the values of faith, and provide the necessary motivation to take whatever action the prophet or famous figure recommends from this[190].

It is in this context that we take particular interest in Du Rand's distinction between apocalypse and apocalyptic. Du Rand agrees with the definition of apocalypse offered above and as with most of us, restricts the term to refer to the genre or type of literature. However, he marks a point of departure by making a very interesting distinction between the two terms, which in our view benefits our own thesis in a very special way. According to him the term apocalyptic describes the ideology (and we like his use of this term), or mental content or critical phenomenon that comes into being when a group of people in society is threatened to such an extent that its existence becomes meaningless and is replaced by a new ideological system which has, significance for that group[191].

Du Rand says much more, but an important point he makes is that the solution for such groups is a radical break with the present, in order to bring about a new future world in which God will judge the majority (who treated the members of the group unjustly) and vindicate the faithful minority (who are members of the group)[192]. Therefore apocalyptic is the ideology that comes as the result of an interpretation of a crisis brought about by injus-

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[190]   *Ibid.*
[191]   J.A. du Rand *Op. Cit.*, p. 227.
[192]   *Ibid.,* p. 228.

tice inflicted on the minority and is the means with which the oppressed survives the injustice. In our own words, it is an ideology that comes as an oppressed group of society radically responds to deprivation. Therefore, when we use the term apocalyptic we use it with this sense of the ideology of a group radically responding to deprivation. Later we argue that indeed Revelation fits into this mental framework of apocalyptic.

We are aware of the debate from scholars like K. Koch, Hanson and Collins concerning the contrast between apocalyptic eschatology and prophetic eschatology as key to the conception of apocalyptic as an ideology. This debate from these scholars assumes that there is discontinuity between prophecy and apocalypticism, an assumption we dispute strongly below. The implication of our dispute here is that we also strongly disagree with this school's conclusion that apocalyptic eschatology can be contrasted from prophetic eschatology in that the former looks for redemption from outside history while the latter anticipates it within history. We argue that apocalyptic eschatology does anticipate change within history, redemption is expected in the here-and-now but how this notion is presented gives the impression of a future redemption outside history and we insist there are reasons for this, which we get into later. Otherwise an observation of interest is the scholar's distinction between apocalypse as a literary genre and apocalypticism. We adopt wholesale Du Rand's definition that apocalypticism refers to the system

or historical movement within which apocalyptic as a mental content or ideology is exercised[193].

Millenarianism

This is the most important *definiendum* in that a discussion of it ties together everything that we have said so far, but what is more important, brings to surface our main argument. It is appropriate for us to begin with lexical definitions and then broaden them slowly but carefully through stipulative and précising definitions in a way that best suits our thesis. Indeed as we define the *definiendum* we are mindful of D. R. Hillers' word of caution. Hillers correctly points out that scholars either in history or social sciences or both have not adopted uniform terminology in discussing movements which we refer in this study as millenarian[194]. Perhaps, most commonly, they have used the *definiens* "millennium" and the adjectives "millennial" and "millenarian" respectively to describe movements of those who believe themselves oppressed, have voiced their complaints and in the process united to seek changes in their conditions[195]. Thus, it is inevitable and more pressing to define this *definiendum* now than before, as lack of uniformity among scholars may usher in confusion, especially in our case, where we refer to both Jehovah's witnesses and particularly, Johane Masowe as millenarian.

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[193]   *Ibid.*

[194]   D.R. Hillers, *Micah: A Commentary On The Book Of Micah*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984. p. 4.

[195]   *Ibid.*

In its original sense, millenarianism is defined in a very narrow and precise manner in terms of Christian eschatology. Thus, in its narrow sense, millenarianism is simply one variant of Christian eschatology. In particular, it refers to the belief held by some Christians based on the authority of the book of Revelation especially chapter 20:4-6 that after his second coming (*Parousia*) Christ would establish a messianic Kingdom on earth and would reign over it for a period of 1000 years (a millennium) before the last judgement[196]. According to Revelation, the citizens of this messianic Kingdom are the Christian martyrs, who will be resurrected for this purpose of the one thousand-year reign of Christ in advance of the general resurrection of the dead.

However, to define millenarianism simply as one variant of Christian eschatology is not only quite narrow and restrictive, but it would also result in us placing emphasis on wrong places, that is, the future and not the present. We are thus more comfortable with defining millenarianism in terms of apocalypticism than eschatology because that way we capture the deep interest in the present aeon that the millenarian movements are so deeply concerned with. N. Cohn's discussion of millenarianism becomes handy at this stage.

Cohn discusses what he calls a much more liberal definition of millenarianism, liberal in the sense that it is

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[196] N. Cohn, "Medieval Millenarianism: Its Bearing On the Comparative Study of Millenarian Movements" in *Millennial Dreams in Action Essays in Comparative Study*. Ed. S.L. Thrupp. The Hague: Mouton and Co., 1962. p. 31.

a much less literal interpretation of the book of Revelation. Cohn thinks that this definition originated with the early Christians themselves as they already interpreted part of the prophecy in Revelation in a liberal rather than literal sense in that they equated the martyrs in Revelation with themselves as the suffering faithful. In other words, they themselves expected the *Parousia* in their lifetime. It is in this regard that we think that millenarianism should be viewed in terms of apocalypticism for those who hold millenarian beliefs are concerned with the present aeon as well.

It has become customary among historians and particularly, social anthropologists to use the *definiendum* in a much more liberal sense. For example, the *definiendum* has become simply a convenient label for a particular type of Salvationism in which salvation is pictured as collective in the sense that it is to be enjoyed by the faithful as a collectivity; terrestrial in the sense that it is it be realized on this earth; imminent in the sense that it is to come both soon and suddenly; total or as we prefer, cosmic or universal, in the sense that the salvation will utterly transform all life on earth so that the new dispensation will not just be more improvement on the present but perfection itself; and miraculous in that it is to be accomplished by, or with the help of the supernatural agencies[197]. We observe that the *definiens*es outlined above are the same *definienses* used to define apocalyptic as a mental content. However, we mark a point of departure here in so far as we have already distinguished between apocalyptic as an

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[197]   *Ibid.*

ideology and apocalypticism as a system or movement within which apocalyptic as an ideology is exercised. We reserve the term millenarian to mean one and the same thing as apocalyptic i.e. referring to the ideology or mental content comprising all the *definienses* outlined above. We then reserve the term millenarianism to mean one and the same thing as apocalypticism and that is, the system or movement within which the millenarian ideology is exercised.

At this point we take interest in S. L. Cook's work for three reasons. In his book *Prophecy and Apocalypticism: the Postexilic Social Setting* (1995), Cook raises a number of important points but three are crucial for us. First, Cook applies the social study of millennial movements to the development of apocalyptic. Thus, he is one scholar who links directly apocalypticism and millenarianism. Second in chapters 4-7, Cook examines Old Testament passages that he identifies using the social concept of "Family resemblance" and takes these as examples of "proto – apocalyptic". Thus, he traces the development of apocalypticism or millenarianism from the Old Testament and this the second advantage to us, because Cook's approach here provides a rationale for what we are doing in the next segment of this chapter. Third and overall, Cook challenges the use of the deprivation theory as an explanation for apocalyptic movements. Thus, he raises a critique to the kind of connection we are making between deprivation and millenarianism. Hence, as we dialogue with him we sharpen our views about the social theory of relative deprivation.

Therefore, already through these definitions we have taken one step into establishing our thesis. We take other steps as we look at Hanson's insights and the whole debate concerning the development of millenarianism from the phenomenon of Israelite prophecy.

Prophecy and Apocalypticism or Millenarianism

For decades, scholars have traced the origins of normative Judaism and subsequently Christianity directly back to the prophets because for a long time the well-defined legal structures found in the Torah and the pre-exilic prophets supplied a reasonable moral system for a well-ordered society[198]. This made the classical prophets popular to the exclusion of the later apocalyptic writings. The basic assumption was that the Law and hence, Priesthood and Prophecy constituted pure religion while apocalypticism was dismissed as a fall from this pure religion into the dark realm of fantasy[199].

However, as is the case with this study, there is a growing interest in the apocalyptic movements of the past and pieces of past apocalyptic literature are being re-discovered due to what Hanson refers to as a growing awareness on the part of some dimension to life which cuts beneath and radically calls into question the materialism which we have come to accept from progress, what Hanson actually calls our god Progress[200]. However, as Hanson points out,

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[198] P. D. Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic* Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979. p. 2.

[199] *Ibid.*

[200] *Ibid.*

the popularity that apocalypticism is gaining brings with it a two-fold risk based on faulty comparative psychoanalysis and phenomenology respectively[201].

First, comparative psychoanalysis brings with it the risk of inaccurate analogy, whereby we allow current interpretations of contemporary millenarian movements to become uncritically normative for our interpretation of ancient millenarian movements[202]. For example, the source of apocalyptic imagery in contemporary apocalypticism is traced to the subjective consciousness of the individual and this evaluation is commonly applied as well to ancient apocalypticism. We agree with Hanson that such a comparative psychoanalytic perspective fails to take cognisance of one fundamental difference: while the contemporary apocalypticist must go to his subjective fantasy to derive appropriate images, the ancient one, with a cosmology that we would designate mythopoeic, found his imagery in respectable religious systems[203]. Our thesis revolves around this point. Earlier we hinted that the Bible is the fertile ground upon which the millenarian movements thrive ideologically. We begin here to take the necessary steps to vindicate this point.

Comparative phenomenology brings with it the risk and, or, problem inherent within dominant reconstruction of the origins of apocalypticism in biblical scholarship over the past half-century. We discuss this problem in a greater depth because it is also our major focus in

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201 *Ibid.*
202 *Ibid.*
203 *Ibid.*, p. 4.

this chapter. D. S. Russell helps us to outline clearly three basic positions regarding the origins of apocalypticism.

Russell identifies three basic positions regarding the origins of apocalypticism but perhaps because it was not one of his purposes to isolate each of these positions for in-depth discussion he does not state the positions as distinctly and clearly as we do here, neither does he state them in the order in which we present them. The first position is that apocalypticism originated independently of the Old Testament most probably in the Inter-testament period from foreign parents. Its ideas were taken up and developed within the setting of Christianity[204]. This is what we may call the traditional position regarding the origins of apocalypticism. The second view is that apocalypticism originated as a continuation of the Old Testament, in particular, as a development of Hebrew prophecy[205]. We take this position but mark a point of departure as we broaden it. Our thesis is that this view is only part of a very broad picture that we slowly but surely paint throughout the pages of this dissertation.

The third view appears to be a reconciliation of the first two theories. According to this third position apocalypticism originated from both, foreign ideas, especially the eschatological beliefs of the Persian religion Zoroastrianism, and Hebrew prophecy.[206] We discuss this in detail later when we deal with Inter-testament literature and as

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[204] D.S. Russell, *Between the Testaments (Revised Ed.)* London: SCM Press, 1963. p. 93.

[205] *Ibid.*

[206] *Ibid.*

we link this discussion with the next discussion on the New Testament.

The traditional position regarding the origins of apocalypticism is arrived at from a comparative phenomenological perspective following two steps. First, scholars who subscribe to this view focus on the book of Daniel as the earliest apocalyptic work and contrast pre-exilic prophecy with the later apocalyptic work through listing the characteristics of each[207]. The two lists which the scholars produce in this regard usually do not have anything in common, for example M. Buber's list[208] below:

Item of Contrast	Prophecy	Apocalypticism
Eschatology	Native, Monistic	Foreign (Iranian) and dualistic
Object of Hope	Fulfilment of Creation	Dissolution of creation by a different type of world.
Judgment	Coming event announced to the unrepentant: not irrevocable	Unalterable final event with firmly fixed date.

Certainly, the list is characterized by discontinuity and scholars have interpreted this discontinuity from a com-

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[207] P. D. Hanson, *Op. Cit.,* p. 4.
[208] *Ibid.*

parative phenomenological perspective at arrive at an obvious conclusion that there is no essential connection between prophecy and apocalypticism. Von Rad for instance, concludes that apocalypticism is a new phenomenon without any primary connections to prophetic Yahwism[209].

The second step in this comparative phenomenological analysis follows logically from the first one. Having concluded that apocalypticism is a new phenomenon, these scholars then seek to explain the origins of this new phenomenon in Jewish literature. The majority, if not all the scholars look to outside sources for its origins and influence. Hanson observes that most of these scholars identify the most common outside source as Persian dualism, especially as it was mediated by later Hellenistic influences[210].

W. R. Murdock is much more explicit in this regard. According to him that the religion of Israel that had so recently attained a status of a truly monotheistic faith should suddenly shift to dualism, is an anomaly in the history of ideas and cannot be understood apart from the simultaneous shift to eschatology[211]. The two phenomena, dualism and eschatology, belong together, for they constitute the two foci of a single theological system; together they formed the core of the Persian religion Zoroastrian-

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[209] G. Von Rad., *Old Testament Theology Volume 2* New York: Harper and Row, 1965. p. 201ff.

[210] P. D. Hanson, *Op. Cit.* p. 5.

[211] W. R. Murdock, "History and Revelation in Jewish Apocalypticism", in *Int. 21* (1967), p. 174.

ism and they were taken up together by apocalypticism under Iranian influence[212]. Other scholars who take the same position include H. Ringgren[213] and O. Ploeger[214].

However, Russell appears to offer a point of departure, which is of interest to us. After reviewing this traditional position regarding the origins of apocalypticism he then draws significant attention to the prophetic influence upon apocalypticism.[215] While cognizant of the possibility of foreign birth, Russell is convinced that the seed of apocalypticism was sown already in such Old Testament passages like Isaiah 24-27, Ezekiel 38-39, Zechariah 9-14 and parts of Joel which, interestingly enough are themselves embedded in prophecy.[216] Russell develops this point further in a manner that ties in very neatly with our overall thesis. In our overall thesis we postulate a close relationship between apocalypticism or millenarianism and deprivation. We see Russell hinting exactly at this. According to him, ideas from the prophetic books like those cited above were planted and thrived initially in the atmosphere of persecution under Antiochus IV (Epiphanes) and later in the atmosphere of oppression, torture and threat of death that prevailed in Palestine

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212 *Ibid.*

213 H. Ringgren, *Israelite Religion* translated by D. E. Green, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966, p. 336.

214 O. Ploeger, *Theocracy and Eschatology* translated by S. Rudman Richmond, John Knox, 1968. p. 26.

215 D. S. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic.* Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964. p. 194.

216 *Ibid., Between the Testament (Revised Ed.)* London: SCM Press, 1963. p. 95.

throughout that monarch's reign.2[217] In the events leading to the Maccabean revolt this seed was brought to full fruition. One of the writings written against this background of persecution, terror and death, was the book of Daniel.[218] We revisit this point later when we debate the causal relationship between millenarianism and deprivation. What is crucial for now is Russell's vital conclusion that apocalypticism has its roots in Hebrew prophecy and may be even have much earlier sources.

It is this point that Hanson develops right through to its logical conclusion. As stated earlier, Hanson's critique of the traditional position is that the conclusion that apocalypticism originated from foreign sources is as a result of a flaw in the methodology of comparative phenomenology. This methodology seeks to explain the origins of apocalypticism by juxtaposing seventh and second century BC compositions respectively and then proceeds to account for the features of the latter by reference to its immediate environment.[219] The long historical development of the phenomenon from the seventh century to the second is ignored totally. Thus, four problems arise as a result of this methodological flaw. First, the origins of apocalypticism are misunderstood. Second, the period of origin is centuries off the mark, implying that the resulting typology of apocalyptic literature is grossly inaccurate. Third, the historical and social matrix of apocalypticism is

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[217]   D. S. Russell, *Op. Cit.*

[218]   *Ibid.*

[219]   P. D., Hanson, *Op. Cit.,* p. 6.

left unexplained. Therefore fourth, the essential nature of apocalypticism is inadequately clarified.[220]

In this study we agree with, and develop further, Hanson's point that the apocalyptic literature of the second century BC and after is the result of a long development reaching back to pre-exilic times and beyond and not a new baby of second century BC foreign parents.[221] Thus, we can only understand both the sources of origin and the intrinsic nature of late apocalyptic compositions by tracing the centuries-long development through which apocalypticism developed from prophetic and other more archaic native roots[222]. We adopt wholesale Hanson's point make a further development. For us apocalypticism did not just originate and develop from prophecy but also essential building blocks from it were imported, adopted and adapted to address contemporary situations of deprivation.

This argument is Hanson's rationale for offering a brief excursus of the history of prophecy in Israel tracing specifically the development from prophetic eschatology to what he calls apocalyptic eschatology. However, what he highlights in that excursus does not quite vindicate explicitly the very valid point stated above that he makes throughout chapter one of his book. For that reason we adopt his very brilliant idea of making a brief excursus through the history of prophecy in Israel particularly focussing on its origins, but we give that excursus a slightly

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[220]   *Ibid.,* p. 7.
[221]   *Ibid.,* p. 6.
[222]   *Ibid.*

different shape and emphasis that vindicate both Hanson's and our own thesis in this study.

Hanson narrows down his excursus to tracing the development of one strand that can be seen running at the heart of many of the so called apocalyptic works and that is, apocalyptic eschatology. This he does for a valid reason. Correctly, he argues that to try and account for too much with a single theory exacerbates the flaw in methodology we stated earlier.[223] However, while agreeing with him on this score, we are cautious not to develop a focus that is too sharp to cut into indiscernible pieces, and therefore destroy even, our main thesis. Hanson senses this potential danger in his sharp focus for he argues that tracing the development from prophetic eschatology to apocalyptic eschatology will not in itself fully answer the question of the origin of every work designated apocalyptic; this task can be achieved through studies of each work and individual unit of tradition[224]. Of course, when we broaden our focus we do not seek to explain the origin of every work designated apocalyptic but the possible origins of the idea or conception of apocalypticism.

Broadening our focus serves our purpose better especially as we argue that the origin of apocalypticism follows, and is part and parcel of, a broad pattern of the metamorphosis of prophetic traditional forms that can even be traced back to the origins of prophecy itself. Our excursus is broadened enough just to lay the foundation for our overall thesis that indeed millenarianism origi-

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[223]   *Ibid.*, p. 7.
[224]   *Ibid.*

nates from within the context of deprivation and subsequent millenarian movements adopt past traditions and adapt them to address new and emerging situations of deprivation. So there appears a broad pattern of the metamorphosis of religious traditions and systems that we begin to demonstrate with the excursus below.

A survey of selected theories on the origins of prophecy in Israel

Basically, there are two broad theories on the origins of prophecy in Ancient Israel. First, there are scholars who argue that prophecy in Israel originated as a phenomenon that was borrowed from the rest of the Ancient Near East (ANE). The second school of thought argues that prophecy in Israel was not borrowed from the ANE; rather, it originated as a unique feature of Israelite religion.

The first broad theory is not our immediate concern and so are two sub-theories of the second broad theory. The first of the two sub-theories are the so called traditional theory on the origins of prophecy that argues that prophecy originated as a basic mechanism through which Yahweh communicated the meaning and demands of his covenant with Israel. The second one is the Philological Theory on the origins of prophecy in Israel that analyses the terms used to designate prophet type persons and from there seek to establish the origins of prophecy in Israel. We focus only on the so called evolutionary theory on the origins of prophecy in Israel and a whole set of sub-theories that suggest political origins of prophecy because these theories allow us to have a point of entry into

the socio-political and economic conditions within which prophecy originated that point to deprivation of some kind. Therefore, these theories allow us to make the kind of connection between millenarianism and deprivation that we are interested in.

The Evolutionary theory on the origins of prophecy in Israel
This theory has been stated in different ways and the popular verse which scholars cite to discuss this theory is I Samuel 9:9.

> (Formerly in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, he said, "Come let us go to the seer"; for he who is now called a prophet was formerly called a seer).

The implication of this verse, as many scholars have inferred, is that the office of the prophet evolved from that of a seer.

A necessary conclusion is that the office of a prophet was fundamentally different from that of a seer. Indeed those who subscribe to this theory make some efforts to distinguish between a prophet and a seer. For example, the office of a seer was almost identical to that of a priest in which case, the seer derived his authority from his office, while the prophet derived his authority from his call. The seer was attached to a particular cultic centre while the prophet was a wanderer who was not attached to a particular centre. The seer as priest was a state official as the office of a seer was part and parcel of the state institutions, and as a result, the seer was paid by state, while the prophet did not receive remuneration especially from the state.

Much of this is true but we think we reap more results and a clearer picture if we state this theory in a manner that is slightly different. Few scholars, if any, have traced this theory from Samuel's call. Samuel's call has been discussed before but not in connection with the evolutionary theory on the origins of prophecy in Israel. Yet, this approach answers one of the critical questions that some scholars and us have raised. If the office of a prophet evolved from that of a seer, what factors influenced this evolutionary process? Proponents of this theory to date are silent on this issue that is crucial for an acceptance of this theory. We are interested in this question not because we purpose to push for an acceptance of this theory, but to magnify the fine details of this theory in a bid to first, establish the social location of a prophet and second, to draw from it and the other theories to come, building blocks with which we construct our own thesis on the origins of prophecy, and let alone, millenarianism.

R.R. Wilson does a wonderful job to make a reconstruction of Samuel's call and therefore, we only build up from there. Wilson's reconstruction of Samuel's call was aimed at establishing the social location of the prophet[225]. Our purpose is to begin now to build our thesis on Israelite prophetic origins but what is more important, the origins of millenarianism.

We utilize the results of both source and redaction critical methods that the call of Samuel in I Samuel 3:1-4:1 cannot be discussed in isolation from chapters 1-2. Source and redaction critics agree in principle that the call

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[225]   R. R. Wilson, *Op. Cit.*, p. 169.

of Samuel is a complex narrative that must have been composed from two or more sources or traditions and the Deuteronomistic historian, so it is believed, gave the narrative its final shape [226]. In its final form the narrative comprises three sections. First, we have Samuel's miraculous birth (I Samuel 1:1-20). Second, we have the dedication of Samuel to the Lord and the evils of the Elide priesthood, (I Samuel 1:21-2:36) and, third the call of Samuel proper (I Samuel 3).

We do not get into the rest of what the source and redaction critics say about these sections. However, the first two narrative sections that are regarded as the preface to the call of Samuel provide us with the kind of hints to the data that we are looking for. The birth of Samuel pursues two basic motifs, which scholars have used to make conclusions concerning the origins and functions of prophecy in Israel. The first motif was that Samuel's birth was a miracle from God and was closely connected with a blessing from a priest. God sanctioned his birth and early in his boyhood Samuel immediately began to perform priestly functions. This implies that the social location of Samuel was the central cult of Israel. Thus, right from birth Samuel was a cultic figure.

The second motif is the anti-Elide motif whose climax is I Samuel 2:22-36 where an unidentified man of God delivered a judgement oracle against the Elide priesthood. Eli's sons were corrupt, unjust, and dishonest and they abused their priestly office. Eli became aware of this but had failed to rebuke them. This implies that he had lost

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[226]   *Ibid.*

his religious sensitivity to evil. Earlier when Hannah was praying in a temple at Shiloh Eli mistook her for a drunkard suggesting that his visionary capabilities too had been lost. No wonder why he could not interpret properly Samuel's call experience later. The loss of his visionary capabilities cast some doubt regarding his effectiveness as an intermediary. While it is not clear whether Eli himself was also evil, this loss of the visionary capabilities was evidence that the Lord had abandoned him and his family. Thus, the Lord sent a man to deliver an oracle stating God's decision to end Eli's priestly line and God's promise to establish a righteous priestly house.

The fact that, it is difficult to say whether Samuel was a priest or a prophet means that he stood in a transition from the office of a seer to that of a prophet. Therefore, the suggestion is that the office of a prophet evolved from that of a seer. The reason for this evolutionary development was probably that the office of a priest was now corrupt and it was no longer sufficient to meet the needs of the people. So, somehow the people were now suffering some kind of cultic or cultural deprivation.

This theory is strong in one respect that is of interest to us. It provides the necessary link between the rise of the prophetic office and deprivation. However it is weak in so far as it does not attempt a more or less detailed social reconstruction of Israel that brings to surface the political factors that also influenced this evolution. It is for this reason that we look at the next sub-theory that looks at essentially the political factors that influenced the rise of the prophetic office.

The Political origins of Prophecy

This theory essentially makes the same inference that the priestly office was no longer adequate to meet the needs of the people and therefore it was necessary for the prophetic office to develop. However, differences exist between these theories in terms of the setting and context of the origins of the prophetic office.

This theory draws from insights of scholars like G. E. Mendenhall and N. K. Gottwald and W. Harrelson who succeeded to look at the history of Israel from a socio-political perspective. Two strands of interpretation ensue from this perspective. One school argues that prophecy did not necessarily originate with Samuel but rather the phenomenon originated a bit earlier during settlement in Canaan[227]. The basic argument is that the Hebrew people were identical to the *Hapirus* of the *Armana* era. The *Hapirus* themselves were a group of declassed people who, according to Mendenhall, withdrew from the socio-political system in Canaan that was characterized by feudalism and was therefore quite oppressive[228]. According to this view, the Canaanite social structure was structured feudally and hence, pyramidal thus:

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[227] P. T. Chikafu, "the Audience Presupposed in the Conquest, Infiltration and Revolt Models: A Sociological Analysis." In *Journal of Theology For Southern Africa No. 84*. 1993.

[228] *Ibid.*
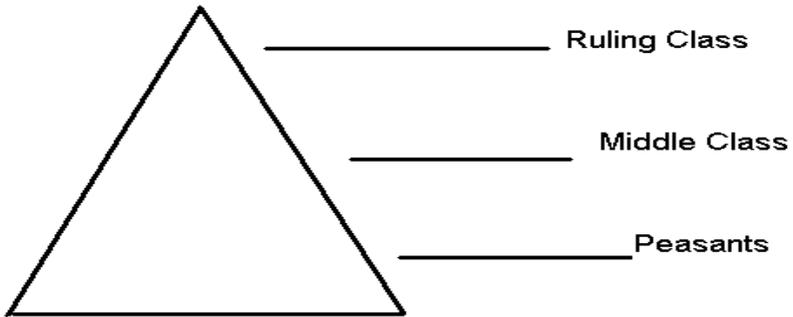
At the top of the society were the king and the ruling class followed by the middle class of merchants or business people and at the very bottom were the peasants. The *Hapirus* came from the latter class of peasants who found the Canaanite feudal system very oppressive. Like a typical millenarian movement, at least in the definition of Hillers above, the *Hapirus* united to seek changes in their conditions. They organized themselves into a liberation movement aimed at overthrowing the oppressive social structure.

P. T. Chikafu picks up this theory and clarifies a point we are very much interested in. According to him the Canaanite social structure then was legitimised and perpetuated by the religious ideology of Baalism[229] which was also structured pyramidal thus:

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229   *Ibid.*
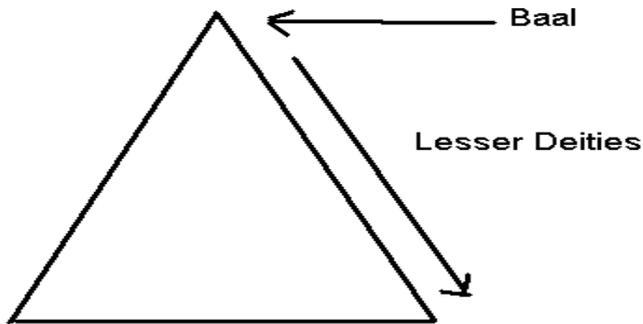
The religious structure was superimposed onto the social structure and thus legitimated the *status quo*. Chikafu's theory thrives on the phenomenological and functionalist assumption that society tends to project its social structure on its belief system and vice-versa, so that the religious structure, though introduced secondarily to the social structure, legitimises the existing order.[230] Therefore, although Chikafu does not say it this way, through the psychological tendency of paradigm associations and probably, as Chikafu points out, through a ritual ceremony that commemorated the pantheon of Baal, the religious institution of Baalism sustained the oppressive Canaanite social structure.

Thus, the liberation struggle of the *Hapirus* was far more than a physical struggle to change their conditions. The *Hapirus* had to fight both the oppressive social structure and the religious ideology behind the system. It is in

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230   *Ibid.*

this context that this school of though locates the origins of prophecy in Israel.

The *Hapirus* intended to form an *egalete* (a community of equals) and a different ideology had to support such a community. The *Hapirus* found a champion in Yahwism, a religious ideology without a structure and was therefore best suited to legitimise and perpetuate the egalitarian society of the *Hapirus*[231]. The Levites, coming after the manner of Moses, became the political commissars responsible for formulating and interpreting the religious ideology of Yahwism. Yahweh in this case was viewed as a liberator deity who wandered with his people and revealed himself in action, that action of liberating his people. The basic assumption behind this is that peasants cannot win a revolution unless "intellectuals" support them, who in this case happened to be the Levites: Yahwist intellectuals who probably gave the revolution the necessary motivation through their Zeal for Yahweh, the God of the *egalete*, and thus, shaped the *egalete* itself[232]. The basic assumption behind this theory is that prophecy originated during the settlement in Canaan. It is in this regard that it differs fro the next theory that we discuss briefly below since it is only a slight modification of the theory we have just considered.

The theory of Institutional conflict considered briefly

The theory we have just considered necessarily implies that prophecy originated during the settlement of the Is-

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231   *Ibid.*
232   *Ibid.*

raelites in Canaan. This settlement of course may have extended to the period of Samuel. However, this theory is developed further into the theory we are currently considering, the theory of institutional conflict. According to this theory prophecy in Israel did not necessarily originate during the settlement. Rather, it originated with the rise of the monarchy as an institution. Once again, the priest must have received remuneration from the state and logically must have supported the *status quo*. In this context the priest could not criticize the king easily even when it was obvious that the king was abusing his power and was diverting from the values and, or ideals of the liberation struggle. In this context the office of a prophet emerged. This new office did not derive its authority from the state and therefore it originated in a bid to provide checks and balances to the system of the monarchy. The clashes between kings, on one hand, and prophets, on the other hand, must be understood in this context. Considering their role in the struggle and as the custodians of the values and ideals of the struggle the prophets would be involved in both the installation of kings and their dethronement. So, in as much as they were kingmakers, the prophets often undermined and removed kings from the throne. There is evidence of such functions in the prophetic narratives.

We mark a point of departure here as we seek to reconcile these latter two theories and elements of the evolutionary theory we considered earlier. We argue that the evolutionary theory raises a very important observation that the office of a priest, which we think is one and the same office as that of the Levite, was no longer adequate

to meet the needs of the people, and since the priest probably received remuneration from the establishment, the priest must have supported the *status quo*. Therefore, a different class of intellectuals was required who would articulate with vigour and a different sense of urgency the needs of the *Hapirus*. The prophets were such intellectuals. They may have come from among the Levites but they obviously interpreted the law and the covenant with different interests and slant. So, the idea of evolution remains. This is plausible especially as we note that at this very early stage it is difficult to distinguish between the priestly and prophetic functions of the early prophets, Moses and Samuel.

Thus, one point remains clear and solid; in its infancy prophecy is neither quite distinct from priesthood nor quite distanced from the sacral law. Therefore, in this case the phenomenon of prophecy must have originated when the traditional forms of religion could no longer address the needs of the devotees due to changes in the socio-political and economic conditions of the devotees. As was the case with the latter theories, the devotees may have organized themselves into movements that responded to the new challenges in ways that were, in more cases than one, quite radical. It is in the light of this critique that we state our thesis for the first time in a more elaborate manner.

Our point of departure and hence thesis, benefit a lot from two social scientific models namely, the models of Sectarianism and Relative deprivation respectively. We are of the view that by using the model of sectarianism we not only clarify the origins of prophecy in Israel, but also we begin to do a number of things that are pertinent to our

overall thesis. First, we lay the ground for our argument concerning the origin of millenarianism. Second but as a further development strictly related to the first point, we provide the theoretical framework for a broader understanding of the phenomenon of millenarianism. Thus, as we show later, we argue that the model of millenarianism develops from, and is clarified by, the model of sectarianism. Third, already we begin to tie together at this early stage, millenarianism and relative deprivation.

The origins of Prophecy in Israel from the perspective of Sectarianism and Relative Deprivation

While there were earlier works on sectarianism for example, W. A. Meeks (1972) and J. Gager (1975), we rely heavily and almost entirely on R. Scroggs' work on this subject for three reasons. First, as P. F. Esler puts it, Scroggs offered "the first methodologically conscious and detailed attempt to apply contemporary sociological studies of sectarianism to early Christianity"[233]. Second, Scroggs' work is quite a rich aggregate of insights drawn from early works on the concept of religious sect by M. Weber and E. Troeltsch and a number of sociologists especially, W. Stark, E. T. Clark and B. Wilson to mention just a few. Third, Scroggs deals with critiques of the sectarian model, especially P. L. Berger's critique[234] in a convincing man-

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[233] P. F. Esler, "Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts: The Social and Political Motivations of Lucan Theology," in *SNTSMS Vol. 57* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987 p. 46.

[234] For a detailed discussion of the critique see P. L. Berger, "The Sociological Study of Sectarianism", in *Social Research Vol. 21,* 1954 pp. 447-485.

ner. We highlight only those points that link directly to our argument on prophecy and millenarianism as a whole at relevant points in the discussion and where we think we need sharper insights or complimentary notes from any of the earlier works cited above we indeed refer to the works so as to complete both Scroggs' and our own picture.

Scroggs applied the model of sectarianism to early Christianity and argued that early Christianity came as a product of sectarian protest.[235] Out point of departure is clear. We instead apply the model of sectarian protest first to ancient Israelite prophecy and our thesis in this regard is that prophecy in Israel originated as sectarian protest. We say much more as we link the two models of sectarianism and relative deprivation. This link comes out immediately as we analyse the seven characteristics of a religious sect, which Scroggs lists and discusses in reasonable detail. We go through the same discussion but placing emphasis on points that relate more closely to our own thesis.

The first characteristic that Scroggs discusses is that the sect begins as protest[236]. Several sociologists argue that the rise of a sect is closely related to reaction against economic and societal repression within a particular class or classes of society[237]. That is, people who form sects are

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[235] R. Scroggs, "The Earliest Christian Community as Sectarian Movement", in *Social Scientific Approaches To the New Testament* ed. By D. G. Horrel, Edinburgh: T. and T Clark, 1999. p. 70.

[236] *Ibid.*, p. 72.

[237] *Ibid.*

either those who have been denied a share in the wealth of the society or those to whom status has been denied by the establishment. Stark summarizes this clearly.

> The chief reason for men getting together in order to form sectarian groupings has been their unhappiness in, and revolt against, a social system within which their position – the position of their class – was, in Beblen's terminology, humilific, for instance because their livelihood was insecure or their wages low, or their status (what Weber refers to as their estimation of honour') was unsatisfactory.[238]

Immediately we label this human condition described above, deprivation and at this point take the opportunity to define deprivation, let alone, relative deprivation, as the model is now crucial for an appreciation of our argument from now on. We expand on this definition and analyse it in detail later when we discuss the nature, character and operations of millenarian movements. For now it is sufficient to offer a brief definition in order to allow us to proceed with our discussion.

D. F. Abele notes a complication regarding any attempt to review the history of theories of deprivation and relative deprivation and that is, the theories enter, explicitly or implicitly, into so many explanations of specific religious and political movements and so many general theories in this area.[239] On our part this is undesirable and therefore we do not review that history. Rather we offer a definition

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[238]   W. Stark, *The Sociology of Religion Vol. 2 Sectarian Religion*. London: Heinemann, 1967.

[239]   D. F. Aberle, "A Note on Relative Deprivation Theory as Applied to Millenarian and other Cult Movements," in *Millennial Dreams in Action* ed. By S. L. Thrupp. The Hague: Mouton & Co. 1962. p. 209.

already synthesized from the works of others but mainly guided by Abele's insights.

For us, the human condition that Stark describes above is tantamount to deprivation. When a social system or the establishment denies status or, as it were, threatens the livelihood of a certain individual or social group, then the system creates deprivation. Of course deprivation is not necessarily marked discomfort although deprivation almost always results in marked discomfort[240].

In our view the key to an understanding of deprivation is in the statement that Weber used and that is "estimation of honour". We utilize this phrase to clarify the meaning of deprivation. We view deprivation as that human condition created by the social system or establishment, which is far less than the "estimation of honour" of either the individual or the particular social class affected. The assumption is that each individual or group of society has a certain "estimation of honour", that is, a "canon" or standard or norm that the individual or group of society uses to accord oneself or itself a particular status in the society. Then, deprivation is the humiliating and, or, dehumanising human condition that strips the individual or group of society of their status or estimation of honour. That is, a condition that brings them lower than their estimation of honour. Therefore, by implication deprivation is relative and not absolute.

Without becoming too technical, we accept wholesale Aberle's definition of relative deprivation. Aberle defines relative deprivation as a negative discrepancy between

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[240]   *Ibid.*

legitimate expectation (what we refer to above as estimation of honour) and actuality (what we take as what there is, what is actually happening at a given point in time)[241]. The underlying assumption here is that an individual or group of society has particular expectations, which they consider as the proper state of affairs (their canon). We add that religion provides the content of these expectations and the framework within which the individual or group of society organizes these expectations and formulates them into canons or standards, which maybe standards of behaviour, criticism, or standards of an eschatological order, an anticipation of a new socio-political order but with divine sanctions and so, these expectations are not mere prophecies of what will happen tomorrow but standards that may be simultaneously present in each individual or social group[242]. It is around these standards that the individual or social group organizes oneself or itself and derives status. Therefore, relative deprivation occurs when something less than these standards is fulfilled.

It is in this context that we cast afresh and adopt Scroggs' thesis. His thesis is that a sect is formed in order to protest against relative deprivation. By coming together the people not only express their desire to be rid of that relative deprivation in the world but also they express their desire to form a new world where they can find acceptance and value. This we deal with later, the point to note now is that the sect begins as a protest against rela-

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241   *Ibid.*
242   *Ibid.*

tive deprivation[243]. This is the first and major characteristic of a sect. All the other characteristics are supportive characteristics that help complete the broad picture of a sect. For this reason we discuss these other characteristics of a sect briefly.

The second characteristic of a sect is that the sect rejects the view of reality taken for granted by the establishment[244] and we add that just like the protest, this rejection is radical. As we stated immediately above, when people come together to form a sect, on top of protesting against relative deprivation they also express a desire to form a new world where they can find acceptance and value in accordance with their standards. Therefore, people who form sects necessarily believe or express the belief that there should be great, if not, extreme social or political change. Precisely this is our definition of the term radical. By radical we mean, "believing or expressing the belief that there should be great or extreme social or political change"[245].

This is in keeping with our definition of an apocalyptic, hence, millenarian movement. Earlier we argued that the millenarian believe in the imminent end of this aeon, an urgent expectation of the impeding overthrow of all the earthly conditions; and an overthrow that is cosmic and this is quite radical. So, the millenarian movements under

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[243] R. Scroggs, "The Earliest Christian Communities As Sectarian Movements," in *Social Scientific Approaches To New Testament Interpretation*. Ed. D.G. Horrell. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999. p. 72.

[244] *Ibid.,* p. 73.

[245] *Ibid.,* p. 74.

study are sects to begin with that began as radical protests against relative deprivation. We explore this further and seek to establish much more firmly this position as our overall thesis later when we deal with the movements themselves. It is interesting to note that the society that humiliates the sect is the "outside" society, which may mean the political establishment, the upper class that controls wealth and land, or the religious establishment and, or even the intellectual establishment.[246]

The sect protests in such a way that it expresses in various ways its rejection of this outside society that has humiliated it and the rejection may take the form of separation from that world which more often than not is quantitative rather than geographical separation and laying down of structures against the outside society.[247] The hostility and rejection may sometimes result in the establishment or outside society threatening and, or, actually persecuting the sect. This reinforces the rejection.

The third characteristic is that the sect is egalitarian.[248] The sect is an *egalete* clearly marked by the absence of a hierarchical structure with societal barriers, be they class, economic, birth, age and sex[249]. Members are completely equal to each other no matter how much status distinction the outside society might assign[250]. Some become leaders not because of their personal status but by virtue

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[246]   *Ibid.*

[247]   *Ibid.*

[248]   *Ibid.*

[249]   *Ibid.*

[250]   *Ibid.*

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of their ability[251]. It is interesting that authority in a sect stems from the spirit[252]. So, it is the spirit that allows the members to participate in the divine. Since all participate in the divine, therefore all are equal. Hence, with this quality of life the member finds in the sect, the member experiences a new sense of humanity, an experience of joy and love; a quality of life that helps the sect member to regain self-acceptance[253]. This, according to Scroggs, is what influences the sect member to remain in the sect while the deprivation in the outside society explains why the members join the sect in the first place[254].

We wonder whether this description of a sect and its operations under the spirit is anything different from that of a prophetic guild. If the common assumption that prophetic guilds were the raw material of Israelite prophecy is valid, then this social scientific model of sectarianism sheds light to the origins of prophecy in Israel. We argue that prophetic guilds were indeed the raw material of Israelite prophecy and these guilds began as sects protesting against relative deprivation prevalent in the established society. Therefore, Israelite prophecy originated as a radical response to relative deprivation.

Strictly, related to this third characteristic is the fourth one and that is, a sect offers love and acceptance within the community.[255] The egalitarianism, the mutual love,

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251 *Ibid.*
252 *Ibid.*
253 *Ibid.*
254 *Ibid.*
255 *Ibid.*

joy and acceptance experienced in the sect are in fact, an antithesis of the harsh outside reality.[256] The quality of life in the sect is viewed, as the will of God and it is that life intended and demanded by God.[257] So those in the sect are the saved, sons of God living according to the will of God. Salvation becomes the realization of this worth.[258]

The fifth characteristic is that the sect is a voluntary association[259] and sixth one is that the sect demands and commands total commitment from its members.[260] Members in a sect are not born into it but they are converted. Those who join the sect make a committed decision.[261] Terminology that describes this special moment is diverse and the process may either be momentous or prolonged. In the case of the former we talk of a call that the member experiences and in the case of the latter we talk of incubation as was the initiation process into a prophetic guild.

Whatever may be the case, the sect commands a total commitment from the member. Stark and Wilson consider this as the necessary corollary of all the characteristic of a sect discussed above.[262] For the sect member there should be a clear distinction between the sect and the world. The sect must be kept different from the world and so the world must not be allowed to invade the sect, otherwise the invasion might result in the sect losing its es-

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256   *Ibid.*
257   *Ibid.*
258   *Ibid.*
259   *Ibid.*
260   *Ibid.*
261   *Ibid.*
262   *Ibid.*, p. 72.

sential characteristics.[263] In other words the sect requires that each member lives out the vision of the sect completely. Failure to do this is betrayal of the cause of the sect. Wilson puts it clearly.

> Not only does the sect discipline or expel the member who entertains heretical opinions, or commits a moral misdemeanour, but regards such defection as betrayal of the cause, unless confession of fault and appeal for forgiveness are forthcoming.[264]

Some extreme cases of discipline involve the total annihilation of a whole group of people. We have examples among Israelite prophets who threatened the total annihilation of the Israelites unless they repented, sought forgiveness and obeyed the Lord. Moses killed all those who made the Golden calf. Elijah butchered all the 450 prophets of Baal. The message of doom if the nation refused to obey and hope if they obeyed was not uncommon among the classical prophets.

An interesting point about this sixth feature that Scroggs raises and one that we develop into quite an integral part of our overall thesis is that the sect is sometimes forced to use the language, some of the artefacts and customs of the establishment but its intention however, is to create a reality, in so far as is possible, that is totally different from that of the established society.[265]

Finally, some sects are Adventist and we argue that the prophetic movement was such. One of the central themes

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263   *Ibid.*
264   *Ibid.*
265   *Ibid.*

of Israelite prophecy was the advent, the future coming of the Messiah. As Hanson argued, an excursus through the history of prophecy shows the development of prophetic eschatology into what he called apocalyptic eschatology.[266] It is the belief in the future coming of the Messiah that is at the heart of this development.

Our earlier argument to broaden our excursus of prophecy becomes even more vindicated. Hanson's emphasis and focus on only one strand, apocalyptic eschatology, as we state earlier, is methodologically valid, but as we discover at this point to agree with him wholesale without broadening our focus as we do would be to agree with only a fraction (one seventh) of the total picture. Below we argue though briefly that we can safely view the Israelite prophetic movement as a sect whose origins we can explain in terms of this movement's response to deprivation. If our argument is plausible, then prophetic eschatology, that manifests itself in the belief in the advent of a Messiah, is one out of the seven characteristics of a sect. Therefore, as we trace the development of the Israelite prophetic movement as a sect, into a clearly identifiable millenarian movement we need the full picture that encompasses all seven characteristics of a sect.

A brief excursus of early Israelite Prophetic Movement as a Sect

A reconstruction of the early Israelite prophetic movement as a sect is interesting in that it reconciles a number of seemingly opposing pieces of evidence, explains a

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[266] P.D. Hanson, *Op. Cit.*

number of previously grey areas surrounding the origins of prophecy in Israel and it provides us with grounds and a model to discuss systematically later the two millenarian movements under study.

We do not have uniform views regarding the origins of prophecy in Israel. This we have seen when we reviewed some of the theories above, where there is no agreement concerning when exactly prophecy originated, with what event and with which figure.

Some scholars who take what is in the biblical text as plain history regard Abraham as a prophet as it is stated in Genesis 20:7. In which case prophecy originated with Abraham in the second millennium BC but the circumstances surrounding the origins are not clear. We do not consider this theory valid but it is interesting to observe that Abraham as an individual may have experienced relative deprivation as a sojourner in Canaan. He was without a land of his own and lived far away from his kin. Please note that the promise of a land flowing with milk and honey formed the core of the Israelite dream and, or, vision and this is what is captured by nearly every prophet who came later.

However, at this stage Abraham does not protest against this deprivation and join a sect. Therefore, in our theory it is very difficult to see prophecy originating with the figure of Abraham. That he is called a prophet in Genesis 20:7 is probably anachronistic. Probably a group of Elohists later formulated a concept of prophecy that included figures like Abraham as prophets. It is interesting to note that the Elohim Source or the Ephraimite Tradition forms the basement complex of this text. The rea-

son why this source views Abraham this way is different from what we state above as a reason for viewing Abraham as a prophet. Abraham is called a prophet because of his intercessory role when he prayed for Abimelech and his household. This was a view of prophecy that was probably confined to a group of people, the Elohists, in the Israelite society,[267] which may not have been a viewed widely shared by the generality of the Israelite society.

The next view that can be inferred from the Pentateuchal Traditions is that prophecy is Israel originated with Moses. The time period is the period of the Exodus and the circumstances are clear, oppression in Egypt forced those who were oppressed to come together as a sect and protest against the dehumanising conditions of slavery in Egypt. As argued earlier, human degradation itself is a cause of deprivation and therefore, looked at from the perspective of sectarian protest whenever the establishment society humiliates and dehumanises people the sect forms and revolts against the establishment.[268] The experience in Egypt was one such experience that humiliated and dehumanised the Israelites so much so that they began to come together and expressed their desire to rid themselves of that humiliating situation.

It could be that during the time of Moses this protest may not have been conscious to the minds of the sectarians. Or, the Israelites very well felt the human degradation and the societal rejection but they were probably not able to speak it out and certainly not able to analyse the

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[267]   R.R. Wilson, *Prophecy and Society In Ancient Israel.*
[268]   R. Scroggs, *Op. Cit.*

reasons for and the result of their joining the sect. Therefore, in its infancy, the Israelites sect was probably amorphous and lacked clear organizational structures. It is in this light that, just like Scroggs, we take particular interest in Weber's view that Scroggs. We hinted on this interest in chapter one and we develop it further in later chapters when we analyse the views of M. F. Brown, W. Kempf and S. J. Palmer and N. Finn already reviewed in chapter one. The interesting question is when exactly does protest begin and therefore, when exactly should we say a prophetic movement is now a prophetic movement?

Both Weber and Scroggs place weight upon a charismatic leader (prophet) as the dominant cause of the emergence of a sect and sectarian protest.[269] This implies that a prophetic movement takes root with the availability of a leader who is able to articulate the deprivation of a group and to provide the necessary vision and way forward. Stark develops this view and argues that it can happen that the depressed class or stratum is so abject and wretched that it has not even the strength to protest and rebel and this is a special case where leaders are apt to come from outside to organize the protest.[270] Recent writers however, place the weight on spontaneous reaction within the alienated class.[271] The deprivation itself forces people to gather and protest spontaneously without necessarily being led by anyone.

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[269]   *Ibid.*
[270]   *Ibid.*
[271]   *Ibid.*

We reconcile these two views. Textual evidence appears to pint to spontaneous reaction against deprivation, which, because of lack of organization and clear leadership, the establishment was able to suppress. Several attempts at leaving the Pharaoh's court are reminiscent of this spontaneous reaction that was thwarted by the establishment. Evidence of at least three names for the mountain of God, Sinai, Horeb and Kadesh may point to three Exodus Traditions and hence three groups trying to escape from Egypt. Of these two were probably thwarted and were not as successful and prominent as the Sinai group.

Whether, as Stark puts it, the Israelites were so abject and wretched that they had not even the strength to protest and rebel, is a point open to debate, but there is evidence that the Israelite case was one that Stark refers to as "a special case where the leaders are apt to come from outside".[272] Moses was from the Pharaoh's court. Some scholars have even questioned his Israelite origins since he bore an Egyptian name. The Yahwist ideology that guided him was equally foreign to the Israelites. It came from "outside", from a cultic centre belonging to an outsider Jethro, the Midianite.

Whatever was the case the coming of Moses, a charismatic prophet with a clear ideology, was perhaps in Weber's words, "the dominant cause" of the emergence of the Israelite prophetic movement as a sect. This way, we maintain that prophecy in Israel originated with Moses and the Exodus experience.

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[272] *Ibid.*

Lack of a definitive theory on the origins of prophecy in Israel may be due to the fact that scholars probably have different dominant figures with which they associate the historical origins of prophecy following Weber's hypothesis. Besides Moses, Samuel and Elijah feature also as the charismatic leaders associated with the historical origins of prophecy in Israel. Indeed, we are cognizant of the scholars' argument that there is too much anachronistic data about Moses to place emphasis on him as the charismatic prophet who was the dominant cause of the emergence of the Israelite prophetic movement as a sect. However, we argue that when we analyse the circumstances surrounding Samuel and Elijah respectively none surpass the dehumanising and alienating experience of slavery in Egypt. Certainly, slavery was real *galut,* the sum total of all suffering, that left a lasting mark of inhuman treatment among the Israelites and we have no doubt that this was the main experience that brought the Israelites together to express their desire to be rid of that humiliating experience.

The history of human experiences reveals that when the people reach that stage all that is needed to trigger a revolt is, as Weber puts it, a "charismatic leader" who articulates the people's emotions and provides them with directions through a clearly articulated ideology. Moses was such a leader and Yahwism, centred on the Decalogue, provided the necessary ideology. This is why as we demonstrate below, throughout the history of Israelite prophecy, Moses remains a dominant figure, even into the New Testament, despite efforts by some redactors to suppress and underplay his role. Further, although Is-

raelite prophecy went through various phases and became metamorphosed, Mosaic Yahwism namely, Yahwistic monotheism, Yahwistic ethics and judgement remain key distinctive features of Israelite prophecy.

If indeed our argument above is plausible then we need to revisit the definition and function of a prophet. We define a prophet as the charismatic leader who speaks against dehumanising conditions and the alienation of other people and is able to lead the people to revolt and rid themselves of the humiliating situation in the world, forming a new world where the people can find acceptance and value. This is what Moses did and the prophets who followed him acted "after the manner of Moses" in that they each spoke against dehumanising conditions that the people of their time were experiencing.

It is not clear whether or not immediately at the time of origin the people then named the sect, a prophetic movement and the spirit and ideology that guided the movement, prophecy. The Yahwistic (J) source,[273] which scholars believe to be the earliest Pentateuchal source, views Moses as a national leader whose main role was the political task to deliver the Israelites from bondage in Egypt. Thus, from the perspective of this source and the section of society where this source came from, Moses was not a prophet. Since the source highlights the Sinai tradition, it acknowledges the origin of the Levitical priesthood and its basic function of meditating the Law to

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[273] For a detailed discussion of this source, and their characteristics see N. Habel, *Literary Criticism of the Old Testament,* but details are offered by P. Ellis, *the Yahwist The Bible's First theologian.*

the people. However, Moses' national political role is highlighted at the expense of the priestly role. Aaron comes out as the figure that performs priestly functions. It is not surprising that in a much later source, the Priestly (P) source[274], the priesthood descends from Aaron. Thus, at this level we witness two offshoots growing side by side, the political institution and the religious one with no clear-cut distinction between the two.

Moses' role as a prophet comes out in two sources that the majority of Old Testament scholars believe to have come a bit later than the J. Source. These sources are the Elohist (E) and the Deuteronomistic (D) sources respectively.[275] Scholars offer divergent views concerning these two sources but in this work we take the Elohist and the Deuteronomist as later redactors. We argue that, unlike the J-source that came from the South, the E-source came from the North either at the same time or a bit later than J. The existence of apparent doublets in the story of the patriarch Abraham (see Genesis 12:10-20 from J and Genesis 20 from E) shows that the E-source narratives were perhaps meant to be parallels of the J-source narratives but representing the Northern views. Thus, while the

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[274] N. Habel, *Op. Cit.* offers a detailed discussion of these sources. However, a detailed discussion of the views on prophecy from the J. E. and D. sources is in R. R. Wilson. *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel.*

[275] Some scholars, for example P.T. Chikafu, do not think that these Pentateuchal sources can be traced to as far as the prophetic books. We do not get into this debate as we remain satisfied with this view, which at the moment provide us with a systematic source interpretation of the prophetic books.

southern section of Israel saw Moses as a political leader the North interpreted his role in religious-political terms and saw him primarily as a prophet. A key text in this context is Numbers 12, which we exegete briefly.

Scholars are not uniform regarding the literary history of this text with some concluding that this text cannot be linked with any of the regular Pentateuchal sources.[276] However, we agree with a sizeable number of scholars who argue that the text must have been given its shape by the Elohist, for the chapter reflects largely the Elohist's characteristic views of prophecy.

The text is clear that there was a dispute between Moses on one hand and Aaron and Miriam on the other. The opening statement of the chapter is that the latter "spoke against" Moses. The premise indicator "because" shows that the reason for the dispute was that Moses had married a Cushite woman apparently in contradiction of the Law or the commandment that they were not supposed to marry foreign women. However, that matter is immediately dropped and what seems to be the real reason for the dispute comes out. It seems the complaint from Aaron and Miriam was whether Moses was the only intermediary. This implies that both Aaron and Miriam claimed to be legitimate channels through which God spoke to the people. It is not clear why only Miriam was punished but it seems she was probably the more outspoken one. It seems within the Northern section of Israel a problem of the presence of many intermediaries, who

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[276]   R. R. Wilson, *Op. Cit.*

according to the Elohist were prophets, had arisen[277]. The problem became acute especially when the intermediaries offered contradictory messages and yet each claimed to be speaking from God.

Indeed the source history of the text is complex as there is evidence of several traditions that have been woven together somewhat loosely, but the overall view regarding prophecy must have come from the Elohist.[278] The Elohist provides a solution to the problem through a tradition where the three intermediaries are summoned to a tent of meeting where Yahweh declares Moses as the prophet par excellence.[279] The text does not seem to dispute that both Miriam and Aaron are indeed intermediaries but with these two Yahweh communicates through dreams and vague speech which implies that whatever these two and even any other intermediary say it is an interpretation of Yahweh's will which may be wrong if the intermediary fails to interpret the dream, vision or vague speech. With Moses however, this is not the case. With Moses Yahweh communicates directly and not in vague speech implying that Moses' prophecy cannot be wrong. Thus, the Elohist establishes what we may call a hierarchy of intermediaries with Moses at the top;

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[277]   *Ibid.*
[278]   *Ibid.*
[279]   *Ibid.*
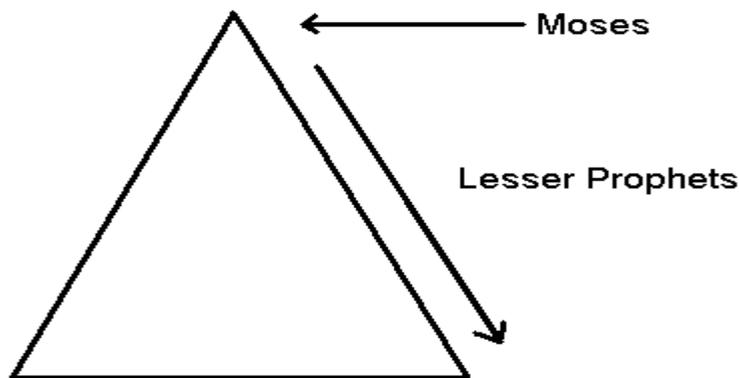
So, whenever the message of the other prophets conflicted with that of Moses, Moses' message was to be preferred. Hence, for the Elohist Moses could be regarded as the normative prophet, the archetypal prophet who fixed the norm, the rule or standard by which all subsequent prophetic teaching and behaviour had to be judged.

This E-source view of prophecy is found in an elaborate manner in the Deuteronomistic source. The text in Deuteronomy 18:9-22 shows exactly how the D-source adopted the E-source view of prophecy above and edited it by providing a legal framework to legitimise the view. The Deuteronomist lists some forms of mediation that are referred to as abominable practices quite unacceptable to Yahweh. The Deuteronomist reports that these forms of prophecy are forbidden through an apodeictic law.[280] It is interesting to note that the Deuteronomist compares and contrasts these forms of prophecy with "prophecy after the

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[280] J. Blenkinsopp, "Deuteronomy" in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary Student Edition.* London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1993. p. 103.

manner of Moses." Prophecy after the manner of Moses comes with divine sanction and is therefore, true prophecy. Any other form of mediation is false prophecy.

The D-source elaborates its view of prophecy in verses 15-22 and a very important phrase in this regard is "I will raise a prophet from among you". This phrase implies that a true prophet had to be a native of Israel but what is more important a true prophet had to continue Moses' prophetic office[281].

Some scholars think that the words in his mouth" (18:18) are actually reminiscent of the call of Moses at Mount Sinai.[282] Therefore, "my words" implies and possibly entails Yahweh's commandments as they were given to Moses at Mount Sinai. Thus, J. Blenkinsopp is perhaps correct when he argues that prophecy in Israel originated in Yahweh's request for mediation at Mount Sinai[283] and the basic function of a prophet was as G. S., Davies puts it "to mediate God to Israel, his presence, his words and his authority".[284]

It is not immediately clear when in the history of Israel these ideas were formulated and this is what creates some uncertainty concerning the origins of prophecy. However, in the light of our theory of sectarianism and relative deprivation, if these views about Moses are a reading back into events then the later redactors, the Elohist and Deuteronomist, read very well the unfolding events in the his-

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281   *Ibid.*
282   *Ibid.*
283   *Ibid.*
284   *Ibid.*

tory of Israel. They perhaps read that what was experienced during the times of Samuel and the monarchy were experiences of deprivation but these were not comparable in intensity to the dehumanising conditions of slavery in Egypt. If Samuel, Ahijah of Shiloh, Elijah and Elisha, to mention a few charismatic leaders who voiced the people's protest against deprivation, could be greater than Moses who brought out Israel from the most striking dehumanising experience of deprivation in Israel's whole life. It is indeed valid that may be by the time of Moses these ideas were not known collectively as the phenomenon of prophecy but the germination of the prophetic movement as a sect may have begun for the conditions for such germination were quite ripe then.

It is interesting to note that each point in the history of Israel that is taken to mark the origins of prophecy in Israel is one way or the other, a point in time when the Israelites suffered some kind of relative deprivation. To exemplify our point we refer to some of the theories on the origins of prophecy in Israel that we discussed earlier.

The Evolutionary theory on the origins of prophecy discussed earlier identifies Samuel as the last judge and earliest prophet. Scholars who subscribe to this theory do so for other reasons but our point remains that at that point the Israelites were experiencing relative deprivation arising from the corrupt, unjust, dishonest Elide priesthood that was abusing the priestly office. It appears the people abandoned the priestly cult, gathered around the charismatic Samuel and formed a sect that protested against the religious deprivation created by the Elide priesthood. The result was the formation of the prophetic movement as a

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sect. That there were "sons of prophets" that gathered around Samuel at this stage begins to make sense. Further Anderson's argument that the prophetic guilds were the raw materials of prophecy also beings to make a lot of sense.

Similarly, the theories that associate the origins of prophecy in Israel with Israelite politics do fit neatly into our thesis here. Scholars who think that prophecy did not necessarily originate with Samuel but rather it originated much earlier during settlement in Canaan, do not quite use our vocabulary but the whole description of the conditions of the *Hapirus* is a description of nothing else but relative deprivation. The same applies to the theory of Institutional Conflict, what this theory boils down to is that the prophetic movement began as a sect protesting against the relative deprivation created by the King's abuse of power. Even if we were to extend the origins of prophecy to the period of Elijah, we still maintain that the prophetic movement originated as a sect protesting against the religious-political deprivation created by Ahab and Jezebel in particular as they vigorously promoted Baalism.

Our argument is that we have these different theories each associating the origins of prophecy in Israel with a particular historical period and figure because scholars are not agreed concerning which experience of relative deprivation exactly resulted in the formation of the prophetic movement. We argue that of all the various experiences of relative deprivation suffered by the Israelites, none surpasses the dehumanising conditions of slavery in Egypt. It is this major experience of deprivation that re-

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sulted in the formation of the prophetic movement. However, the naming of phenomena does not always follow immediately after their origins. The community that gathered around Moses to protest against the deprivation in Egypt was not known immediately as a prophetic Movement; Moses himself was not known immediately as a prophet and his ideas that emanated from Sinai were not known immediately as prophecy. Similarly the seventy elders who gathered around him full of the spirit of God were not known immediately as a prophetic guild. That later figures and movements were named in clear prophetic terms does not necessarily imply that the phenomenon of prophecy originated during these later periods. It is here that we concretise our thesis and state a basic axiom that guides us throughout this dissertation.

We recall once more Scroggs' characterization of a sect. According to Scroggs the intention of a sect is to create a reality, in so far as is possible, totally different from the established society, but in so doing the sect is forced to use the language, some of the artefacts and customs of the establishment.[285] We put it in a slightly different manner. What we seem to see throughout the history of Israel is that at certain points in that history a new situation would arise creating relative deprivation that is, the stimulus. In a bid to create a new world different from the establishment the devotee looks into the cult or religion for a response but the cult either fails to address the deprivation adequately or fails to respond adequately to the stimulus. The devotee does not find solutions elsewhere

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[285]   R. Scroggs, *Op. Cit.*

because the devotee's cosmology is centred on the cult would as a result have developed some characteristic confidence in one's cult. Therefore, it is inevitable that the cult would have to undergo that metamorphosis necessary to allow the devotee to respond to the stimulus.

The metamorphosis is not total because the devotee retains the main bricks (traditions) of the old cultic system and uses some of these main traditions to respond to the new situation. So, the form, which these traditions take, becomes new but their inner morphology remains intact. Therefore, in the light of Lewis' point raised earlier in chapter one, in terms of form or outside structures comprising rituals, dress, houses of worship and artefacts to this effect, Israelite religious movements may have changed drastically from the sacral law and priesthood to what we refer to here as millenarianism. However, the internal logic, the spirituality or the key faith and, or, beliefs were retained and carried over from one generation to the other. We observe the major stages of metamorphosis in the religion of Israel throughout the remaining chapters.

Another interesting point directly related to this key observation we have just made above is that this kind of analysis is the basis of such recent social models like R. Finke's organizational theory.[286] We deal with Finke's social model in detail later in a chapter dealing with analysis. However, his views help us to move and provide

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[286] R. Finke, "Innovative Returns to Tradition: Using Core Teachings as the Foundation for Innovative Accommodation," in *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion Vol. 43 Issue 1,* 2004.

a framework within which we analyse the rest of the Israelite prophetic movement especially as it is reflected in the prophetic books listed in our objectives. The same framework is what we use to get into the Inter-testament and New Testament periods respectively.

According to Finke, religious movements sustain organizational vitality by preserving core teachings and promoting adaptive innovations.[287] The core teachings guard the sacred beliefs and practices held as timeless, and the innovations adapt these teachings to new cultures and contexts, with the most successful innovations building on the core.[288] We do not necessarily agree with him in the fine details of his theory but what his theory does is to help us discuss the transitions from Israelite pre-canonical prophecy to canonical prophecy (especially exilic and post-exilic prophecy) and from the latter to full-blown millenarianism that takes us into the New Testament. Hence, in the next chapter we review especially the background of selected prophetic books fro classical prophets in a bid to demonstrate that the movements behind the books originated within the context of deprivation and that the survival of the movements is depended upon the metamorphosis and the constant internal logic built upon traditions from the past that are used to respond to new situations of deprivation.

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[287] *Ibid.*

[288] *Ibid.*

CHAPTER 3: THE TRANSITION FROM PRE-CLASSICAL TO CLASSICAL[289] PROPHECY AND DEVELOPMENT INTO THE INTER-TESTAMENT PERIOD

Rationale for the Orientation and Content of the Chapter

Earlier in the chapter above we noted two crucial conclusions from Russell and Hanson's arguments respectively. Russell saw the seed of millenarianism sown already in some passages of prophetic books like Isaiah 24-27, Ezekiel 38-39, Zechariah 9-14 and some parts of Joel. Hanson brought this argument to its logical conclusion when he argued that millenarianism was not a child of second century foreign parents but rather it was born and natured in the fertile nursery beds of Hebrew prophecy. We added our own dimension that essential blocks of tradition from Hebrew prophecy were imported from the past, adopted and adapted to address contemporary situations of deprivation. In this chapter we analyse not just the passages above but the books isolated above especially the background issues in a bid to demonstrate our thesis and to show that the millenarian movements behind the books

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[289]   We note here three different designations used to distinguish the two groups of Israelite prophets. Some refer to the prophets as non-writing and writing prophets respectively. While others refer to them as pre-canonical and canonical prophets. We use the terms indicated herein without getting into the merits and demerits of their use, as these do not affect what we designate by them.

concerned originated from within the context of deprivation. Already we had begun doing so in our concluding discussion of Finke's theory in chapter two above. For that reason we begin this chapter from where we left in the previous chapter.

Finke's Theory and our development of the Theory

Finke's theory needs to be modified a bit and be related strictly to our main argument, which we stated earlier and are using as the main thread linking the chapters of this dissertation. From the excursus so far we managed to isolate the sacral Law, Yahwistic monotheism and Yahweh's judgement as core features of Israelite prophecy but our identification thus far is still so vague that we cannot be confident to point out that ultimately it is these three aspects that come out as core definiens from where we derive key teachings that comprise millenarian ideology. What is it that is carried through and is irreducible in Israelite religion? What is the core teaching that develops eventually into millenarian ideology that eventually shapes and guides millenarianism?

We have already disagreed with Hanson's suggestion that it is prophetic eschatology that eventually develops into millenarian ideology. We think that Hanson's suggestion is inadequate. We maintain that in the transitional period from pre-classical to classical prophecy a number of events took place that saw the three basic definiens stated earlier being taken up from the old system and developed through adaptive innovations into basic teachings that formed the core of classical prophecy and later apocalypticism namely divine election, the anticipation of the

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day of the Lord and the concept of the remnant, the idea of the Messiah and Son of Man and a much more concrete belief in life after death.

However, it may be misleading to think of this transition in terms of an evolution only in the teachings. We maintain that it is possible to trace definite patterns in prophetic traditions and behaviour or activity that emerged and evolved into the basic patterns and schemes of millenarianism. Our discussion at this point benefits from von Rad's description of the transition from pre-classical to classical prophecy. Von Rad discusses this in a chapter with a very interesting title "A New Element in the Eighth Century Prophecy".[290]

In his assessment of what marks a transition from pre-classical to classical prophecy Von Rod notes what he calls "the new element" in the prophecy of the Israelite prophets then[291]. It seems according to him the early Israelite (pre-classical) prophets discussed so far, on top of the characteristics that other scholars identify as features distinguishing them from classical prophets, were marked by one clear pattern of behaviour and that is, they operated in prophetic guilds which according to Anderson, were the raw material of Israelite prophecy.[292] Other scholars add that these predecessors of classical prophets, say, Samuel, Nathan, Ahijah of Shiloh, Elijah and Elisha to mention a few, clearly did not write their utterances

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[290] G. Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology vol. 2.* London: Harper and Row, 1965. p. 77.

[291] *Ibid.*

[292] B. W. Anderson, *Op. Cit.* p. 230.

hence the designation non-writing prophets.[293] Thus, some scholars have described classical prophecy in terms of three elements that distinguish it from pre-classical prophecy. O. Eissfeldt summarizes these elements in a way that tempts us to borrow his summary. According to him classical prophetic writing reveals elements of three different kinds namely:

(a) Collections of saying which the prophet proclaimed whether as the mouthpiece of Yahweh in the form of first person utterances of Yahweh, or as utterances of his own referring to Yahweh in the third person;

(b) Autobiographical accounts by the prophet himself concerning his activity, or at least concerning important sections of it, and in particular concerning his call;

(c) Senses of narratives concerning the prophet, which have been put together by others, no doubt his disciples.[294]

According to Eissfeldt, concerning pre-classical prophets we have only third person narratives of the saga and legend type.[295] In other words, we are hardly justified in assuming that, as is clearly the case with classical prophets, collections of saying existed also for prophets, and that the compilers of the third person narratives used these sayings.[296] Or, if such collections did exist, we cannot establish with certainty, like we do with the majority of cases regarding classical prophets that the words, which the narrator puts into the mouths of these proph-

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[293] O. Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament An Introduction*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1974. p. 148.

[294] *Ibid.,* p. 147.

[295] *Ibid.,* p. 148.

[296] *Ibid.*

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ets, actually derived from the collections.[297] The words may well have been invented by the compilers of these biographical narratives out of familiarity with either the attitude of the prophets concerned or the speech-forms of the prophets of their own time or both. Thus, one of the underlying factors distinguishing pre-classical prophets from the classical was this literary element. It is not immediately clear whether indeed the scholars here assume that there were changes also in the content of the core prophet teachings discussed thus far.

However, Von Rad marks a very interesting point of departure. According to Von Rad, with eighth century prophets (who mark the transition from pre-classical prophets) we notice a new element that is three-tier thus:

(a) They had a clearly identifiable call which is narrated somewhere within the prophetic book usually at the beginning of the book;
(b) They possessed a unique knowledge of Yahweh and his designs for Israel and
(c) They engaged in, what Chikafu calls, a "unique dialogue" with Israel's past history.[298]

In other words, the word of Yahweh came to them alone in a way that could not be transferred to anyone else and so they became individuals in their own right.[299]

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[297] *Ibid.*

[298] P. T. Chikafu, "Amos, The Prophet on The Run And Father of the Sons of the Prophets: A Revisitation Of The Expulsion Order in Amos 7:12-15 In The Light of The Religion of Israel." (*Unpublished*) p. 22.

[299] *Ibid.*

Thus, these prophetic individuals would say 'I' in a way never before heard in Israel.[300]

What this argument boils down to is that, with eighth century prophets we notice a shift from the phenomenon of prophetic guilds to individual prophetic operations. We do see the logic of this line of thinking. One of the implications of the phenomenon of prophetic guilds is that a prophet could become a prophet by training and not necessarily through a call.

Therefore, a prophet who emphasized his call by implication derived his authority more from this call than the incubation in a prophetic guild. Amos' dissociation from such a guild (Amos7:14) may make sense in this regard. Also, the claim to possess a unique knowledge of Yahweh and his designs for Israel and to engage in a unique dialogue with Israel's past history is consistent with emphasis on, and constant reference to, the prophet's call and subsequent dissociation from the traditional prophetic guilds. Hence, ultimately when prophesying the classical prophet was very 'conscious' of his difference from other people so that he attained a "personal identity" and therefore, religiously he also became unique qualitatively.[301] Thus, the prophets were isolated from the rest of society and as a result they became very lonely.

Von Rad's characterization of the eighth century prophet is that of an individual who is creative. Because of both this creativity and the fact that nobody really understood the experience he underwent society inevitably iso-

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[300] *Ibid.*
[301] *Ibid.*

lated the prophet. Since his ideas marked a break from the ideas of the mainstream society and because of his emphasis on his uniqueness, the mainstream society also may have been hostile to, and indeed persecuted, the prophet. This way the prophet became a very lonely individual. Therefore, apart from the movement away from group prophecy to the prophet as an individual of the key criteria to distinguish primitive from classical prophecy was the 'I' that the eighth century prophet used and some scholars maintain that in fact, this should be regarded as the major hermeneutical key and a chief distinguishing feature.

It is interesting to note that implicit within Von Rad's theory is the observation that there was a transition also in the content of the prophetic message and the way that the classical prophets interpreted the traditions of the past. This we derive from points (b) and (c) above of Von Rad's three-tier new element in eighth century prophets. We note this particular observation because of our later argument. For now we accept the bulk of the criticism levelled against von Rad, in particular we take keen interest in Chikafu's critique and point of departure.

Chikafu is right to analyse von Rad's thesis in the light of developments in the 19th century criticism of the Bible.[302] The 19th century was characterized by the rise of the social sciences among other things and psychology was taking centre stage as one of the main tools for penetrating even the biblical text. The main thrust of the discipline of psychology then was to analyse and understand

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[302]   *Ibid.*

the human being especially the human being as a creative individual. So this contributed a lot in the shaping of von Rad's thesis of the prophet as a creative individual who because of the nature of his revelation was isolated by mainstream society and became a loner. Von Rad was not alone in this endeavour. Earlier there were scholars like B. Duhm and G. Holscher, to mention a few, who set the stage for later scholars to draw from psychological theories an understanding of prophetic figures and as Chikafu rightly points out these were the hey days of psychology as it was developing as a discipline with its methods.[303]

However, what we would want to highlight from Chikafu's critique is his refusal to accept that the eighth century prophet was a loner. Chikafu argues that the sociopolitical conditions surrounding the prophet were such that he would not survive as a loner. Chances of being silenced, abused and challenged were very great.

According to him there is abundant evidence in the text that prophets experienced serious opposition, criticism, ridicule and resistance to their message, but what was worse, they also received threats of different kinds.[304] As such they desperately needed support and encouragement.[305] When the going got tough the prophet needed not just encouragement but also counselling. Therefore it would be foolish for the eighth century prophet to dispense with the system of prophetic guilds that must have provided such support and encouragement to pre-classical

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[303] *Ibid.*
[304] *Ibid.*
[305] *Ibid.*

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prophets in the face of opposition. While Chikafu does not say it, at least explicitly, we argue that with primitive prophecy, which was not quite separated from priesthood, the need for such a support group was more cultic than it was political. But as prophecy became quite distinct from priesthood that often had the support of the state, the need to evolve the structure of prophetic guilds into a clearly organized system that provided the prophet with a solid support base became even more acute than ever before. Perhaps learning from the hardships of Elijah and Elisha who perhaps survived essentially because of the primitive structure of the prophetic guild, the eighth century prophet developed the structures of the prophetic guild in such a way that the function of this system became multifaceted and this is what some scholars may have interpreted as the absence of the phenomenon of the guilds. We agree with the Chikafu that the prophetic guilds were still functional and continued to function.

Therefore, what was imported from the past and metamorphosed into new phenomena were not only certain beliefs and, or, traditions but also certain structures. As we get into classical prophecy we observe that key prophetic teachings and structures from the past are not only becoming refined but also transformed as a way of responding and adapting to new conditions.

The prophetic guild that was initially a system of incubation during which the young aspiring prophets were initiated into the cult of prophecy, underwent necessary metamorphosis to meet the new challenges in the eighth century. Chikafu clearly outlines the new social function

of the prophetic guild.[306] First, as was the case before, the prophet needed a support base in the light of the pressures from the monarchy, which as we argue, became more acute during the time of Amos. The prophet got this support from sympathizers who most likely became disciples because they admired and perhaps revered the prophet owing to the body of information the prophet claimed to possess and the new world that the prophet intended to create.

Second, information is difficult to process alone. The prophet needed a group that would inform him (receiving) and send information (transmitting) to his constituencies. If the society in general did not understand the prophet, they needed people who would process the information and transmit it in a way that made the prophet understandable.

Third, but strictly related to the second function above, the disciples surrounding the prophet wrote, maintained and preserved the words and activities of the prophet forming clear prophetic traditions. As such, as the function of the "sons of prophets" became this diverse we begin to witness a new phenomenon in the eighth century of written prophecy. It is in this light that some scholars have distinguished pre-classical from classical prophecy in terms of the form that the prophecy comes in, that classical prophecy comes to us in written form hence the designation-writing prophets. So, one of the functions of a prophetic guild was to maintain written records of the father of the guild. There is textual evidence to support

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[306]   *Ibid.*

this. Isaiah often instructed his disciples to write and indeed he eventually deposited his prophecy to his disciple for preservation (Isaiah 8:1). Jeremiah had Baruch who was probably one of his disciples who supported Jeremiah when he faced serious opposition. Baruch wrote and preserved Jeremiah's prophecy (Jeremiah 36).

Fourth, the "sons of the prophets" must have also provided material support. These four points form what we may regard as Chikafu's sociology of survival. According to him the sociology of survival generally refuses to accept that the prophet was a loner[307]. Therefore, the prophet operated in a community of disciples.

We agree with Chikafu and the rest of redaction critics who argue that the editorial hand of say, the Deuteronomist, underplayed the communal aspect of prophecy so much so that ultimately the prophet appears as a loner. According to Chikafu the Deuteronomist came up with the idea of authentic prophecy and one of the major criteria for authentic prophecy was the idea that a true prophet, "like Moses", received revelation directly from God.[308] The concept of prophetic guilds, especially the idea of incubation, necessarily implied that the prophet did not always receive revelation from God; rather he also received training to do his prophetic work. This would militate against the Deuteronomist's ideology of authentic prophecy. Thus, the Deuteronomist and later editors of the same persuasion highlighted the individuality of the prophet so as to bring prophecy into unison with the Deu-

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[307]   *Ibid.*
[308]   *Ibid.*

teronomistic ideology. But even with this heavy editorial work there is still evidence that the prophet indeed had a support base and prophecy itself had a communal dimension.

We have valuable lessons to learn from both von Rad and his school of thought on one hand, and the critics of this school, especially Chikafu, on the other hand. Von Rad's argument that the prophet was a lonely person has a strong beginning. He argues that the prophet suffered opposition and isolation from the society and his critics do not disagree with this. We see this point as a vindication of a point we have been making all along. In our own words the prophet experienced deprivation and the deprivation that the eighth century prophet suffered ushered in the transition from pre-classical to classical prophecy.

However, what seems to cause problems of interpretation is Von Rad's conclusion that the prophet became a loner as a result of the deprivation. We agree with Chikafu's critique but we add onto this a refinement in the light of Finke's thesis of adaptive innovations that the eighth century prophet responded to the deprivation in a radical way by transforming not only key prophetic traditions but also certain structures from the past, in particular, the structure of prophetic guilds. The transformation was such that as we get into eighth century prophecy we begin to see what we may call a clearly co-ordinated prophetic movement. The way information was received and transmitted, for instance Jeremiah's communication with the exiles, presupposed a serious network that can only be discernable if we conceive prophecy then as a movement.

Therefore, at this juncture a very important trajectory of our major thesis has taken root and we should see it form a basic thread uniting this chapter and the chapters that follow in a very crucial way in that all core elements of our overall thesis are embedded in this trajectory. Von Rad's argument confirms our theory of relative deprivation. The persecution and isolation from society that the prophet suffered basically constitute what we deem to be relative deprivation. Von Rad also confirms our earlier argument that the prophet was a key figure in the movement as the originator of a vision that guided the movement and key interpreter of that vision (see Von Rad's view of the prophet as a creative individual who became a loner because of that). Chikafu's thesis not only confirms but also strengthens further our perception of Israelite prophecy as a movement. Chikafu argues that there was a structure and basic system within which the prophet operated. We add our own observation in the light of our critique of Hanson and Finke's theses respectively. We highlight some crucial points from their arguments that are relevant at this point.

Hanson argues that apocalypticism (or millenarianism in our own terminology) derives from Israelite prophecy. According to him prophetic eschatology is carried over from prophecy and this is what develops into millenarianism. In the light of Chikafu's argument, we add that there is much more that is imported from prophecy. The leadership structure consistent with the basic pattern of prophetic guilds is also carried over. The leader of the millenarian movement is the equivalent of the father of the prophetic guild who originates a vision based on and con-

tinues from essential traditions from the past. This vision is what forms the core of the millenarian ideology that guides the movement. In a way we might argue that there is no millenarianism without this prophetic figure who is the leader. The disciples are the equivalent of the sons of prophets. Both are guided by apocalyptic vision originated by the prophetic figure, the leader. The vision is continuous with, and is buttressed by, core prophetic traditions or teachings from the past. The vision and teachings form the basic apocalyptic ideology of the movement. So both the leader and the followers operate within a structure and system that is perpetuated by some doctrines clearly organized into an ideology. It is this ideology that keeps the system going.

When deprivation occurs, through adaptive innovations the whole system is stimulated into a response. The core teachings are not adopted and adapted raw, but they are metamorphosed in line with the external forces that the movement is responding to. This metamorphosis also affects the movement's external features. The movement develops external structures that are appropriate enough to respond to the deprivation. In this sense the response is total, hence, our use of the term radical. Therefore, studying only the external features of the movement and determining the social impact of the movement only on the basis of its external form would be to end mid-way. Our hermeneutical exposition of the classical prophets selected for study below, and later our study of both the New Testament and selected millenarian movements in Zimbabwe is guided primarily by this paradigm and this

becomes the key conceptual metaphor that we take as our guiding hermeneutical key throughout the dissertation.

We observe a basic pattern, which we can best describe from the perspective of the hermeneutical model of images that we borrow from the sociology of knowledge. The underlying assumption behind this model is the understanding that every human effort to understand a phenomenon emerges from some vision of the whole of reality; some image that, wittingly or unwittingly, provides the key to unlock what the phenomenon is all about.[309] Further, the image thus developed to understand one piece of reality, tends to provide models for understanding other aspects of reality.[310] What this view does is to perceive of human beings as organizers of bits and pieces of knowledge, perceptions of the way things are, fragments of truth, be they fragments of fact or value, into images of the whole of things.[311] Precisely, this is our perception of the prophetic figure at the helm of the millenarian movement. When deprivation occurs a prophetic figure emerges with some vision of the whole of reality, imports and interprets core traditions, fragments of truth, which can be fragments of either fact or value, from the past, and organizes them into an ideology or what C. V. Gerkin calls "a broad-gauge image that becomes the organizing structure or principle for understanding all aspects

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[309] C. V. Gerkin, *Crisis Experience In Modern Life Theory And Theology For Pastoral Care.* Nashville: Abington Press, 1979.

[310] *Ibid.*

[311] *Ibid.*

of the world and the place of humans in it".[312] It is this image that becomes the key to unlocking phenomena. The experiences of deprivation are interpreted from the perspective of this image and the millenarian's estimation of honour is restored in this image. Therefore, it is this image that sustains the millenarian. Our survey of selected classical prophets below aims precisely to vindicate this observation.

Survey of Selected Classical Prophetic Books, Daniel and Qumran Texts as a way of testing our Hypothesis Thus Far

Our rationale for selecting the prophetic books and Qumran texts below is two-fold. First, as we argued earlier the book of Revelation that we focus on later draws insights from this literature we have selected. However, second and as we observe later, the two millenarian movements selected for study do understand the book of Revelation in the light of most of the prophetic books we are discussing in this section. So, as we discuss these prophetic books we are killing two birds with one stone. First, as is explicit in the sub-title above we are testing and vindicating our hypothesis thus far. Second, we are also providing the necessary Old Testament background for a thorough exegesis of Revelation and ultimately a clearer understanding of the beliefs and practices of the two millenarian movements isolated for study in this dissertation. It is essential for us to use these selected books to see whether behind

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[312]   *Ibid.*

every one of them there is a millenarian movement that developed as a response to deprivation.

Inferences from the Prophetic Book of Isaiah

It may have been impossible to deal with the whole book of Isaiah and any of the books that we consider below, in just a section of a chapter like this one had it not been the case that we are benefiting from the fruits of the historical critical method of studying the Bible. In the case of Isaiah in particular, we agree with R. Coggins' observation that one of the success stories of the historical critical study of the Bible has been to establish that the book of Isaiah comprises of sixty-six chapters that came from a variety of backgrounds.[313] Hence, the custom has been to divide the book into two or three divisions namely:

> (a) Chapters 1-39 that according to source critics must have come from Isaiah of Jerusalem.
>
> (b) Chapters 40-66 that are usually treated independently of the first thirty-nine chapters. These latter twenty-seven chapters are further divided into chapters 40-55 that source critics believe to have come from Deutero-Isaiah (or Second Isaiah) and chapters 56 – 66 that according to source critics must have come from Trito-Isaiah (or Third Isaiah).[314]

Source critics arrive at these divisions on the basis of the usual criteria of historical discrepancies, variations in style and vocabulary, and changes in theological focus. Thus far, historical critics have noticed a shift in theologi-

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[313]   R. Coggins, "Isaiah" in *Oxford Bible Commentary*. London: Oxford University Press, 2001. This article is from a CD whose pages are not numbered.

[314]   *Ibid.*

cal themes from chapter 40 onwards. As we argue below, the themes that feature from chapter 40 onwards help us to bring to surface our thesis. For that reason, we concentrate on chapters 40 – 66 of Isaiah and only refer to 1 – 39 by way of comparison especially when such references help to clarify and sharpen further our analysis of chapters 40-66.

Concerning historical discrepancies scholars note that among other references in the early part of the book, especially chapters 7 and 36-39 and certain sections of 2 Kings like 2 Kings 19:2 where Isaiah is mentioned by name, there is clear evidence that the prophets' life and activities are envisaged as taking place during the last third of the eighth century BCE when Judah was under threat from its Northern neighbours, Israel and Syria on one hand, and Assyria on the other hand.[315] However, from chapter 40 onwards this has changed. The people addressed appear to be in Babylon and Cyrus the Persian King who overthrew the Babylonians is mentioned by name in 44:28 and 45:1. Coggins' argument is valid that if Cyprus came into power in 550 BCE then using any of the normal criteria for historical assessment the words referring to him must have been written after him.[316] It is for this reason and others we have not considered that scholars generally agree in principle that these latter chapters, particularly, chapters 40-55 that are believed to betray a Babylonian setting, must have been written in the 540s BCE. Chapters 55-66 indeed offer fewer clear indications

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[315] *Ibid.*

[316] *Ibid.*

of date, but the general consensus among scholars has been to place them later still and as Coggins maintains, during the time when the work of restoration in Jerusalem was going slowly forward among a disillusioned and demoralized community.[317] It is because of this description of the setting of these chapters that we are interested in Coggins' delimitation of the *Sitz-im-Leben* of these chapters. According to him, the *Sitz-im-Leben* implies that the community was experiencing relative deprivation and we utilize this observation to interpret the prophets' words in our analysis below.

However, for the analysis to be rich and complete, we need to note also pertinent observations regarding changes in style and vocabulary, but what is more of interest to us, the shift in theological themes that we notice from chapters 40 onwards. Regarding changes in vocabulary scholars note that common vocabulary in chapters 1-39 include "briers and thorns" and "remnant", but in the later chapters these disappear and they give way to typical vocabulary include *bara'* (create)[318] and *ga'al* (redeem)[319] to mention but a few terms. This sudden change in vocabulary also corresponds to the sudden change in style. For instance, unlike the brief, sharp and often condemnatory oracular style in the earlier chapters (e.g. 5:8-23) chapters 40 onwards comprise what Coggins refers to as repetitive and dignified style and this change is possibly

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[317] *Ibid.*

[318] *Ibid.*

[319] C. L. Seow, *A Grammar for Biblical Hebrew* Nashville: Abingdon Press.

because there is a shift from a human audience to God.[320] In other words, the bulk of the passages in these later chapters are in the form of Psalms addressed to God. The vocabulary we cited and the shift in audience we highlighted are of primary interest to us as they help clarify and vindicate our thesis. Our point becomes clearer in the analysis below as we knit these observations together with observations regarding a shift in theological themes.

Apart from the noticeable changes above, scholars note also a shift in theological themes from chapters 40 onwards. Our main interest lies here. Coggins notes a very important observation that, unfortunately for us, he does not pursue any further probably because his main focus is on the debate that chapters 40 onwards came from a background different from that of chapters 1-39. All the same, his observation remains pertinent to us. Coggins correctly observes that from chapters 40 onwards major theological motifs, which have no obvious parallels and that have played little or no obvious part in the earlier chapters, emerge[321] these are the Exodus and Wilderness deliverance, clearly pictured as a model for a new return from exile to the promised land (40:3-5); the restoration of the destroyed Jerusalem as a symbol of renewed divine favour (Chapter 52) and the concern with the role of the suffering servant. In all these first three motifs the vocabulary appears frequently. The final motif is the concentration on creation and in this motif there is an obvi-

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320   *Ibid.*
321   R. Coggins, *Op. Cit.*

ous use of the distinctive verb used in Genesis 1, but rare elsewhere, to speak of divine creative action[322].

Brief Analysis

For the past decade or so scholars have concentrated on the observations above as evidence to justify treating the book of Isaiah as two, or three, separate and unconnected blocks of material. This has been the major contribution of source criticism. While several fine details of source criticism have been criticized it is worth noting that the substance of the work of source critics in this regard, has not been challenged. For that reason later critics have built on this substance and redaction critics are among them. It is interesting however to note that redaction critics have introduced a paradigm shift that has brought a new complexion in the scholarly study of Isaiah. M. A. Sweeney correctly observes that recent research on Isaiah focuses primarily on "the final form of the book of Isaiah as a whole"[323] and this is the basic orientation of redaction critics.

We observe two basic groups of redaction critics in contemporary studies of Isaiah who have proceeded in two different directions, one diachronic, another synchronic. The diachronic group of redaction critics, like all redaction critics, considers the book of Isaiah in its final form but remain committed to raising historical questions. In this respect, this group envisages an Isaiah school that

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[322] *Ibid.*

[323] M. A. Sweeney, "The Book of Isaiah in Recent Research", *Currents in Research: Biblical Studies, 1.* 1993. p. 141.

was responsible for knitting together the material from differing historical circumstances into a unified block of material we call the prophetic book of Isaiah. Therefore, this approach seeks to discern the basic elements or sub-blocks holding the whole block of material together through the differing historical circumstances in which the material developed[324]

The other group of redaction critics, the synchronic group, regards this kind of approach with historical interests as largely illusory; what we have is a book and therefore the book must simply be treated as a book regardless of the circumstances that are alleged to have led into its composition[325]. We can read Isaiah just as we can read and appreciate a classic novel without inquiring into the background of Isaiah as a whole without exploring the irrelevant details about the circumstance that led to, and during, its composition[326].

If we adopt this latter approach, then we have the daunting, if not impossible, task of exegeting the whole book of Isaiah in just a section of a chapter. The approach does not allow us to do what we want to do and that is, to consider only a section of a book, our rationale being the historical questions that are unique to that section. When we rejected the synchronic approach to the Bible we had already anticipated this problem. However, with Isaiah in particular, scholars who adopt a synchronic approach to the book betray obvious weaknesses in their inter-

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[324] R. Coggins, *Op. Cit.*
[325] *Ibid.*
[326] *Ibid.*

pretation, which include those we raised earlier when we rejected the synchronic methods, and more.

One such recent critic who looks at Isaiah from a synchronic perspective is Klaus Baltzer. So, as we discuss Baltzer's commentary on Isaiah we take him as a representative of this group of critics, but what is more important for us, as a case study of the problems that we face when we adopt a synchronic approach to the Bible. Of course, Baltzer has a historical slant in that he talks about the possible date of writing of the text but it seems his interest in this is somewhere else. It appears dates are proposed so that he can then be comfortable comparing Isaiah with the literature of the Attic Greeks of the time. So, he does not necessarily raise historical questions about the circumstances that led to the composition of the text and so, in our view his approach remains synchronic basically.

We select Baltzer for obvious reasons. Baltzer's commentary on Isaiah is among the most recently published works.[327] It has attracted a wide range of critics and must of the problems raised have to do with Baltzer's approach.[328] Since both Baltzer and his critics offer valuable points that we use to buttress our own argument immediately below and later, we inevitably get into some detail.

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[327] K. Baltzer, "Deutero-Isaiah A Commentary on Isaiah 40-55". Translated by M. Kohl. *Hermeneia*; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001.

[328] Among other critics we have, P. Wegner, *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society Volume 46 Iss. 2,* June 2003; C. J. Dempsey, *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly Volume 66 Iss. 1,* June 2004 and B. D. Somer, *Journal of Biblical literature, Vol. 123 Iss. 1* Spring, 2004.

Baltzer's basic argument is that the book of Isaiah can be discerned from within the context of ordinary literature during the last half of the fifth century BCE. Deutero-Isaiah in particular can be viewed as liturgical drama, a text performed by actors with roles that can be constructed. Contrary to the majority of scholars who think that these chapters were written either during or after the Babylonian exile, Baltzer argues that the chapters were written in Jerusalem during the last half of the fifth century BCE. As we stated earlier, the reason for this date is that it makes plausible Baltzer's argument that the liturgical dramatic structure of Deutero-Isaiah was borrowed from the Attic Greeks.

Following an earlier suggestion to identify the book of Isaiah on "drama" by J. D. W. Watts, Baltzer used Attic Greek drama to interpret Isaiah, and came up with a two-fold rationale for considering Isaiah 40-55 as liturgical drama[329]. First, speakers suddenly appear in the book with little introduction and second, events into the future are alluded to with few historical references[330]. Thus, it is possible to divide the text into acts and scenes in which speeches are assigned to various actors and their movement on stage envisaged.

There are positive points that we take as well won thrift from our analysis of Baltzer's thesis and the criticism it has attracted. First, although he does not elaborate, Baltzer admits that there is no longer consensus concerning Third Isaiah (or Trito-Isaiah). We are aware of this and

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[329] K. Baltzer, *Op. Cit.* p. 25.
[330] *Ibid.*

this is the reason why we were not definitive earlier when we talked about the divisions of the book of Isaiah. In this study we treat chapters 40-66 as a block although mainly we draw evidence from chapters 40-55. We do this as we do not want to allow this debate of the further division of Isaiah 40-66 to overshadow the valid point from source critics, which even Baltzer, and the rest of the redaction critics agree with, and that is, at least the material from Isaiah does not come from a single background, let alone, a single author. So in their attempts to understand the whole book of Isaiah, redaction critics do not dispute this contribution of source critics.

However, we are more interested in what Wegner regards as the major contribution of Baltzer to Isaiah research and that is, Baltzer's observation regarding the use of Scripture in Isaiah 40-55. Interestingly, Baltzer observes that the texts of Isaiah 40-55 demonstrate immense knowledge of scripture, for instance, knowledge of important parts of the Pentateuch, a core of Isaianic material from the eighth century, Jeremiah and Ezekiel[331]. While as is apparent here, the Pentateuch is not the only source of Deutero-Isaiah's imports, for the sake of being brief we discuss only one example of Baltzer's insights regarding the use of the Pentateuch in Isaiah.

B. D. Sommer highlights a difficulty with Baltzer's paradigm of liturgical drama which most critics of drama would raise and that is, the text in Isaiah 40-55 does not have clearly identifiable rubrics that identify the speakers

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[331]   *Ibid*.

and their action[332] but Baltzer does not see this as surprising because the oldest manuscripts of Greek drama that Baltzer uses to interpret Isaiah do not specify which characters speak in which lines. This debate is not our major interest. What is our major interest is that Baltzer endeavours to uncover the identity of each given line's speaker and in his interpretation of the identity of the servant in the Servant Songs in Isaiah 42, 48, 50 and 53 he comes up with a suggestion that has stunned the majority of his critics. According to Baltzer, the servant in the servant songs in Deutero – Isaiah is none other than Moses, who of course is not mentioned by name following the general reticence to do so that we find elsewhere, for example, Hosea 12:13 and Psalm 78[333].

Serious objections have been raised against this interpretation. For example, Wegner finds it hard to see how Moses would bring justice to the nations and while Moses brought a covenant, he was not a covenant himself and so it is difficult to say that Isaiah 42:6 refers him[334]. We raise our own objections but from a different angle and a different standpoint. Indeed we grant Wegner the logic of what he says but we argue that Wegner's critique stems from the fact that he is approaching Isaiah from a perspective different from Baltzer's. Wegner would want to see justice being done to the historical dimensions of the

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[332] *Ibid.*

[333] *Ibid.*

[334] P. Wegner, "Deutero-Isaiah: A Commentary On Isaiah 40-55/Isaiah II vol. 2. Isaiah 28-39." In *Journal Of Evangelical Theological Society*. June 2003 vol. 46, Iss. 2. p. 331.

text and would raise questions like whether or not histori-
cally it is accurate that the redactor Deutero-Isaiah indeed
had Moses in mind when he compiled the Servant Songs.
We wonder whether such diachronic concerns constituted
Baltzer's central concerns. In our view Baltzer's approach
is basically synchronic and it appears to be based on the
assumption of the semantic autonomy of the text. His
interests seem to lie in the literary interpretation of the
text, especially the aesthetic beauty that he can derive
from the understanding of Isaiah as an ordinary piece of
literature, liturgical drama in particular.

Precisely, this is the source of the problems that arise
from this axiom of redaction critics who approach texts
synchronically. Baltzer's interpretation betrays a plethora
of weaknesses that are best summed up in a paradox; he
does not get into historical questions that he gets into. By
suggesting the name Moses Baltzer immediately raises
historical questions that unfortunately his axiomatic en-
deavour does not address, and almost all of his critics
criticize him on the basis of these historical questions that
are not addressed. While we agree with the bulk of the
criticism raised, this is not where Baltzer lets us down.

Baltzer's identification of Moses as the servant in the
Servant Songs in Isaiah is exciting for us because con-
sciously or unconsciously he confirms our hypothesis that
in the later prophetic books we see a pattern in which tra-
ditions from the past are imported. Baltzer's suggestion
actually ended mid-way may be because as we argued ear-
lier, historical questions were not necessarily his concern
and logically he developed his discussion in another direc-
tion. We argue that Deutero-Isaiah probably imported

from the Pentateuch two strictly related traditions namely, Yahweh's faithfulness to his covenant with Israel and The Elohist's conception of Moses as a proto-type of all subsequent prophetic figures. Probably by the time of Hosea and much later, by the time of Deutero-Isaiah this Ephraimite tradition was so established that it formed the sub-structure of most, if not all, prophetic utterances. Hence, the apparent reticence to mention Moses by name may be due to this. It was not possible for the Israelites to have dropped and forgot Moses that easily especially as he was the main hero of their liberation. This point particularly holds water when we consider that Moses still features even in the utterances of Jesus during the New Testament era.

From this point we go a step further. As we argued before, the traditions are not imported raw. We argue that the theme of the servant, whatever is the identity of the servant, is a product of a radical mutation and development of the two traditions, and probably others, from the Pentateuch, whose importation and reinterpretation were necessitated by new challenges in exile and perhaps a later period, the inter-testament period.

We combine our intuition here with Coggins' insight that we continued at the beginning of this discussion, but we have a further excitement. Our further excitement comes from the observation that we are not the only ones with such an insight. Contemporary scholarship on Isaiah provides hints to this insight and we benefit from W.A.M. Beuken's summary of the points that scholars in this regard agree in principle.

Contemporary scholarship sees the book of Isaiah comprising a core of Isaianic material from the eighth century prophet and on top of this core are later redactions added to shape the book so that it becomes relevant for each generation[335]. Fine details of this position have created controversy especially whether there has been an Assyrian or Josianic redaction some time shortly before the exile, before a later postexilic redaction. Whichever way we go, and whatever position we take regarding when in the history of the composition of the book there was a redaction, one indubitable fact remains and that is, the book of Isaiah in its final form is not integral and chapters 40-66 show evidence of having been added by (a) final redactor(s).

This established we take interest in Beuken's salient point arising henceforth. We pick Beuken among contemporary scholars for three strictly related reasons. First, as Wegner puts it, Beuken cites views from many scholars even though he occasionally gives his own stance. So in him we get *resume* of scholarly views on the matter under consideration from a broad spectrum. Second, Beuken appears to have developed a keen interest in the intertextual relationship of a variety of texts from both the Old Testament and New Testament[336] and for that reason he becomes the most appropriate scholar to cite as we develop our thesis that traditions are imported from previous works, a pattern that runs from the Old Testament

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[335] *Ibid.*

[336] W. A. M. Beuken, "The Intertextual Relation of Isaiah 65:17-20 and Revelation 21:1-5b" in *Estudios Biblicos 51,* 1993 pp. 473-510.

into the New and right through to our contemporary setting. Finally, but as a close follow-up of the second point above, Beuken looked at the Intertextual relationship of Isaiah 65:17-20 and Revelation 21:1-5b and so, already he has prepared ground not only for our argument in the next chapter but also for our overall thesis.

Even though he occasionally states his own stance, Beuken highlights a point from contemporary scholarship on which we take keen interest and that is, the purpose of both the later redactions and the reshaping of the book of Isaiah was to make the book relevant for each new generation. We agree with this but we cast it differently in the light of our own thesis. We have already established that traditions from the past are imported but they are not imported raw. There is a necessary process of redaction at the point of importation. We further enrich our thesis. We argue that the radical mutation and subsequent development of the imported traditions in later texts are necessitated by the socio-political and economic conditions prevailing at the time of the redaction.

It is at this juncture that we seek to reap some more fruits from the sociology of Knowledge as we seek to put in place our thesis much more concretely. By seeking to further exploit, this method we do not mean to imply a complex conception of this discipline, as has often been the case when the history of the genesis of the discipline is traced. Our task is simple and that is, doing what we did not do earlier when we introduced the sociological principle of the "image".

We outline our simple and basic understanding of the Sociology of Knowledge and get straight into what it is

exactly we intent to do with the method, basically expanding on concepts already introduced and clarifying grey areas we have had to ignore up to this point. We define the Sociology of Knowledge as a branch of Sociology that studies the Social origins of ideas, and the effects that prevailing ideas have on societies[337] We are more interested in the fundamental proposition by P. L. Berger and T. Luckmann who reinvented and applied the method much more closely to everyday life in the 1960's, that society shapes its knowledge and vice-versa, in which case the sociology of knowledge is concerned with the social reconstruction of reality[338]. The rationale for our interest is that it goes straight to the heart of our study. Basically, our study investigates the casual connection between knowledge and society and vice-versa. Specifically we study how a new religious message spawns the social movements we have identified already and how this causal connection goes both ways.

We take cognisance of the fact that this method first came into widespread use in the 1920's when say, M. Scheler and K. Mannheim and other German speaking sociologists wrote extensively on it but as such, the study zeros in on five concerns among the many concerns of the Sociology of Knowledge which are, knowledge production, knowledge encoding, knowledge decoding and therefore, knowledge retrieval and decision making[339].

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[337]   www. Trinity.edu/mkear/knowledge.html.

[338]   P. Berger and T. Luckmann, *The Social Construction Of Reality* Hamondsworth: Peregrine Books, 1979. p. 15.

[339]   www trinity.edu/mkearl/knowledge.html.

What we can decipher from Beuken's studies of inter-textuality is that in the book of Isaiah we witness a complex process of knowledge production and encoding and how this spawned a new social movement namely the community of Deutero-Isaiah that was trying to come to terms with drastic changes in social conditions. In other words from the perspective of the sociology of knowledge society produces knowledge and encodes it to respond to changes in social conditions and this knowledge in turn originates and sustains new social movements that build up from and continue from previous ones. These new social movements are what we are referring to as the millenarian movements originating as a response to deprivation. This is an image and "pattern" we observe throughout as we study the books from the Old Testament right through to the New Testament and further, as we study the use of this ancient book, the Bible, by the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Johane Masowe.

Baltzer is correct when he argues that when we look at the theological dimensions of Deutero-Isaiah it appears the book puts forth a theology of crisis and a theology of hope[340]. It appears the text reflects a community that was disillusioned by the collapse of the Davidic dynasty and the biter experiences in exile. Clearly there was some kind of relative deprivation. Our hypothesis is that "Deutero-Isaiah" must have been a prophetic figure who imported core traditions, fragments of truth, fact or value from previous prophetic visionaries and organized them into an ideology and image, that became the organizing principle

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[340]   K. Baltzer, *Op. Cit.*

that the exiles used to interpret their own experiences. This was then coded into an ideology that guided the community behind the around Deutero-Isaiah.

At this juncture it is fitting to broaden the concepts of "image" and "pattern" here as we try to decode and retrieve knowledge from Isaiah and the other books below and how the social movements behind the production of this knowledge made the decisions they made and the impact thereon. We broaden these sociological concepts of "pattern" and "image" into the concepts of "paradigm" and "conceptual metaphor" respectively, in a bid to develop the argument above into an essential component of our overall thesis. In this segment, the sociological principles above are defined and applied only in part since we utilize them in full in a later chapter dealing with analysis.

The discussion of Isaiah above not only allows us to flow into the rest of the other books, but also aids us to discern a basic paradigm that runs across from the Old Testament into the New and from the New Testament to contemporary millenarianism. We think the term paradigm here is preferable to pattern because it is broader conceptually and we introduce it at this point primarily for the reason.

We agree with the traditionally accepted definition that the term paradigm derives from the Greek word παραδειγμα whose meaning derives from the verbal form παραδειγκνυναι. The latter means "to demonstrate" and therefore the noun form means "a demonstration", "example" or "pattern"[341] in that it also entails "a set of as-

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[341] www.trinity.edu/mkearl/knowledge.html.

sumptions, concepts, values, and practices that constitute a way of viewing reality for the community that shares them, especially in an intellectual discipline[342]. Thus the social principle of paradigm is preferable to "pattern" as it allows also an investigation into assumptions, concepts, values and practices behind a particular movement's view of reality.

Therefore, when we deduce as we do above, that the authors of the books under study are importing traditions from the past and appropriating them to their contemporary situations, we are not deducing here a simple plain pattern but indeed a paradigm, an epitome, proto-type or standard or typical example of a set behaviour that is anchored on clearly identifiable assumptions, concepts and values of a community that is grappling to come to terms with particular social conditions creating deprivation that inevitably is influencing this community to view reality in a given way. A brief discussion of the remaining books allows us to confirm and make concrete our deduction.

Inferences from the Prophetic Book of Micah

Chronologically, the book of Micah must have come first as it is traditionally dated earlier than Deutero-Isaiah. It is usually placed earlier during the period of Hezekiah[343]. We place it here for two reasons. First, as we argued earlier, our arrangement is not necessarily based on chronology but the logical development of our thesis. Second,

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[342] *Ibid.*

[343] L. Laberge, "Micah," in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary Student Paperback Ed.* London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1993. p. 249.

redaction critics argue that much of the book as we have it now comes from periods long after Micah's day since the style and thematic content of the book suit later periods best[344]. This implies that the question of the date of writing is not decisive. As we discover below, the same holds true for almost all the books under discussion. Therefore, we are at liberty to allow our arrangement to follow more a logical link than a chronological one.

Scholars agree in principle that nothing or little is known of Micah's personal life[345]. For instance it is not immediately clear whether Micah had a political role but if his message is anything to go by, it invites us to make some deductions regarding his political life and the socio-political conditions he operated in.

That the times were bad cannot be questioned. There were definitely some policies by the central government that led to injustice and Micah must have interpreted them as transgression and sin (1:5; 3:8). If we place him towards the end of the eighth century BC, then he must have prophesied during a period when the Assyrian armies of Tiglath-pileser III had conquered Damascus and Ephraim and perhaps when Jerusalem was under siege in 701 BC[346]. The central government must have developed a militarising policy that included forced military service and heavy tax meant to sustain the military activities of

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[344] H.G.M Williamson, "Micah," in *The Oxford Bible Commentary* London: Oxford University Press, 2001. This article is from a CD whose pages are not numbered.

[345] *Ibid.*

[346] L. Laberge, *Op. Cit.*

the state. Thus, we may surmise, as one scholar puts it, from the few details in Lilly and elsewhere, that Micah probably spoke on behalf of his fellow landowners and elders of Moresheth-gath (his home area see 1:1, 14), against the excessive burdens which the centralized militarising policy of the Jerusalem establishment was imposing upon the people[347]. This must have had a serious impact on the people's estimation of honour and how they responded to the related deprivation. We argue that addressing the establishment especially going against it was key to the metamorphosis of prophetic utterances into apocalypticism or millenarianism.

The factors leading to relative deprivation were not only external. Internally, the judiciary and cultic leaders perhaps accepted bribes from princes and merchants who cheated and robbed the poor and humble especially women and children[348]. The prophets were not spared either. They too were accepting bribes and adapting their prophecy to suit their audience and in this environment the leaders easily and comfortably look good for evil and vice-versa[349]. The situation was so bad that Micah was ashamed to identify himself as a prophet and with the prophets (3:5-8). Thus from his denunciation and accusation that often take on the form of complaints, Micah sees no reason why the Lord should not abandon his covenant

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[347] H.G.M Williamson, *Op. Cit.*
[348] L. Laberge, *Op. Cit.*
[349] *Ibid.*

with the people, turn his face away from them and abandon them to their plight[350].

However, it is interesting that Micah introduces a message of hope in the middle of his book. This message of hope has been subject to a number of interpretations especially because it is set in what Williamson correctly referred to as a universal and proto-apocalyptic context[351]. The popular interpretation comes from historical criticism especially redaction critics who argue that this message of hope must have been inserted by (a) later apocalyptic redactor(s). The majority of scholars argue that the style and thematic content of the work suit later periods best[352]. J. Jeremias for example, argues that Micah's uncompromisingly anti-establishment message (3:12) was still fresh in the mind of the people following the fall of Jerusalem at the hands of the Babylonians and the subsequent exile of the leadership of Judah (cf. Jeremiah 26:17-19)[353]. The community of disciples deriving from him began to read this as a fulfilment of the words of their prophetic father and thus, the prophecy of Micah began to leave its mark at a number of points[354]. Jeremias argues that Micah's prophecy in this sense became a "living word of the Lord" that however would never be exhausted by a single event, and thus, new material that looked beyond the judgement pronounced by Micah came to be added[355].

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350   *Ibid., p.* 250.
351   H.G.M Williamson, *Op. Cit.*
352   *Ibid.*
353   *Ibid.*
354   *Ibid.*
355   *Ibid.*

With the new experience the context of Micah's prophecy was broadened to apply to the whole world and its people. That is, it assumed a universal application and apocalyptic dimension that often necessitated even broadening the themes. We argue below that what some scholars think is a reversal of Micah's own themes in chapter 4[356], we take as a necessary development of the themes that are seen transcending the particular world of the prophet.

Indeed there is a sizeable number of scholars who do defend authorial unity such as D. Hillers (1984) and Shaw (1993) and although some scholars think that these attempts are not convincing[357] we do not dismiss them out rightly. The case for (a) redactor(s) who inserted the message of hope may also be uncertain especially as we do not see a sudden change in a style and vocabulary in the Hebrew text. It is quite possible that the prophet Micah, who is responsible for the core of the book, envisaged future hope, and indeed he was quite capable of doing that. It was difficult for him to see Yahweh abandoning his covenant completely.

Either way, we argue that what is crucial is to investigate what the prophet is saying and doing in this work and why? Already we are convinced that there is a paradigm in place, which even the book of Micah, fits into and vindicates. For reasons we have already stated, the suggestion of later redactors is more attractive to us even though the other view has its own weight. With the book of Micah as is the case with the other prophetic books, we go along

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356   *Ibid.*
357   *Ibid.*

with form critical conventions that, all prophecy was originally oral; the original oracles coming from the prophets whose names are attached onto the words of prophecy, comprised brief formulaic utterances and a change in genre could be taken to indicate a change in author.

We refine further the latter point in the light of our paradigm. We have already argued following Chikafu that the prophets were not loners but they had a support group, a community of disciples or, sons of the prophets who extended to later generations. These sons of the prophet preserved the words of their father and these words defined their existence and the sons of the prophet in turn organized their lives around these utterances. However, changes in conditions may have necessitated a process of redaction as the utterances were edited and given a structure so as to enable the community to respond to deprivation. Earlier material was used to address a later situation (Chapter 1) and, as we noted earlier, the original utterances from Micah were broadened (not reversed) to show hope that made Micah's words take their place as a historical example of the timeless "word of the LORD" (1:1)[358].

Once again earlier traditions are imported from the past and are metamorphosed in order to respond to given relative deprivation. A later generation of disciples was perhaps languishing in exile but the words of their prophet in their possession inspired and renewed their hopes. It is crucial to note that the traditions either al-

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[358]   *Ibid.*

luded to or imported are those that were critical of the establishment. The critical prophetic utterances are cast within the context of core of conceptions of the Temple, Land, and the concept of Israel as a nation and her covenantal relationship with Yahweh, the idea of royalty to and faithfulness of Yahweh and the related concept of a remnant. The old traditions were rejuvenated and recast into a universal apocalyptic context, which Laberge summarizes quite neatly[359]. The temple would once again become a centre of the land, let alone, the world.

A new Israel will be born and this new Israel is centred on a faithful remnant from the Old Israel. The leader of the new Israel will be a true shepherd, a bringer of peace in the name of the Lord. Bethlehem and Jerusalem will be renewed and the sources of sin eliminated. This, a new exodus is taking place and a new era based on Yahweh's *hesed* (steadfast love) is being ushered in and indeed the covenant given to the fathers, Abraham and Jacob in the days of Old will be realized. God's wrath has abated and a new era is beginning. This is in our terminology the essence of an apocalyptic ideology.

Therefore, in Micah, we begin to see in an explicit manner the basic ingredients or, the basic *definiens* of apocalypticism. As we can see the apocalypticism is not coming from foreign parenthood but it is arising from a definite response to deprivation. The response is moulded from earlier traditions that are imported and given a new interpretative context. Foreign ideas may have found their way into the pot, but the core ingredients are not foreign.

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[359]   L. Laberge, *Op. Cit.*

At the very centre of the ensuing apocalypticism are definite core traditions preserved and imported from the past and around which later generations of the disciples of the prophets organized their existence. Our thesis here becomes more concrete as we get into discussing Zechariah, Joel, Ezekiel and especially Daniel and selected Qumran texts.

Inferences from the Book of Zechariah

The book of Zechariah is just as intriguing as it is key to the central thesis of this study in many ways. First, Zechariah affirms the validity of the words of the former prophets. Hence, the paradigm we have mentioned earlier becomes so concrete that correctly Tollington sees in Zechariah a new key to understanding all prophecy as a unity and as the key to understanding any socio-political situation behind the prophetic literature.[360]

Second, key *definiens*es of apocalypticism become more explicit than before. Scripture begins to turn to be cryptic and requires a special gift of insight. For example, one major motif in Zechariah is the motif of the "eye" which is the ancient symbol of the interpreter and seer (Numbers 24:3-4).[361] This is a tradition imported from the Pentateuch. It occurs sixteen times throughout Zechariah even though it is not always apparent in the translation either, as K. J. Larkin argues, because it is not idiomatic in English (e.g. at 2:1) or because the text is corrupt (e.g. 5:6

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[360]   H.G.M Williamson, *Op. Cit.*
[361]   *Ibid.*

but see also 4:10; 9; 8; 11; 17 and 12:4).[362] The motif implies, and indeed develops into, the concept of visions. Visions in Zechariah become a key component of prophecy in a concrete and more pivotal way than before. For example, Zechariah 1:7-6:15, which has often been referred to as proto-Zechariah,[363] comprises an anthology of visionary material. Further, it seems in Zechariah the concept of "a remnant" develops into the concept of a "faithful chosen few" and we begin to see emphasis on revelation to this faithful, divinely elected group.

Once again the integrity of the book of Zechariah has been subject to debate. The most common interpretation comes from historical critics who, following the results of source, form and redaction critical analyses, divide the book into proto-Zechariah and Deutero-Zechariah; 1:7-6:15 being Proto-Zechariah, 1:1-6 and chapters 7-8 being an editorial framework containing oracles and preached material dated around 450BCE or after, and chapters 9-14 being Deutero-Zechariah.[364]

The scholars proceed to provide dates of composition for each of the sections but our interest lies in the scholarly descriptions of the theological make-up of the sections Proto-Zechariah has been aptly described as a "theocratic" or "establishment work" because of its, institutional subject-matter and occasionally because of its tone.[365] In tone it is basically pro-leadership, even though

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[362] L. Laberge, *Op. Cit.*

[363] *Ibid.*

[364] *Ibid.*

[365] *Ibid.*

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some scholars view this pro-leadership element in the visionary material as editorial.[366]

In contrast, Deutero-Zechariah is characterized, as an anti-establishment section that criticized leadership and shows it is dissatisfied with the restoration.[367] It is interesting to note that the focus has shifted. Hope is no longer on monarchies with a human being on the throne. Salvation in the here-and-now is nothing but an illusion; trust should be in God who does not change. Thus, Deutero-Zechariah becomes more eschatological in outlook. This is similar to what we have also observed about Deutero-Isaiah.

We do not want to get trapped into the fine details of the arguments regarding the integrity of the book for they may put us out of focus. We are interested here in some views of scholars concerning the possible redaction that took place leading to the final composition of the book. We go a step further as we mark our own point of departure. In particular, we take interest in the possible factors that influenced the development of a more eschatological outlook in Deutero-Zechariah and Deutero-Isaiah we discussed earlier.

Some scholars think that Deutero-Zechariah was written and edited over an extended period perhaps two centuries (450-250) by and for the kind of traditionalists who would later emerge into the light of history as the community at Qumran: separatists who criticized mainstream Judaism for its perceived loss of purity and its political

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366   *Ibid.*
367   *Ibid.*

compromises.[368] This view has two valuable observations for us. First, from an analysis of the text of Deutero-Zechariah we arrive at the possible community behind the text. The redactors were that possible community behind the text. These redactors were possibly experiencing some kind of deprivation that called for a revisitation of the religious traditions and beliefs they inherited from their past. It is interesting to note that on the whole, Deutero-Zechariah is concerned with the restoration of Jerusalem especially its temple after exile.[369] The text also has a special interest in leadership and the establishment as a whole as we noted earlier.

However, what appears to be a problem of the integrity of the book can be explained by the fact that Zechariah and the community surrounding the prophet are importing traditions about the monarchy, Zion and the Temple from the past but as our argument stands, the traditions are not imported raw. Rather they are metamorphosed to suit the prevailing socio-political conditions of the time of the prophet. The anti-establishment flavour is coming from the prophet and his community who are now revisiting these traditions from the past. So, while there is an interest in Jerusalem and the leadership, references to the temple building programme are erased from the text. The text shows evidence of tension within the community and hopes for the immediate restoration period appear to have been soured.[370] Such a *Sitz-Im-Leben* is the fertile ground

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368 *Ibid.*
369 *Ibid.*
370 *Ibid.*

for the growth of apocalypticism and subsequently a millenarian movement. As K.J. Larkin argues, because of disillusionment, hope is deferred until the final day of the Lord, which must be preceded by further suffering.[371] The belief becomes essentially eschatological. Also, because the human monarchs have failed it is illusionary to place hope in them. Trust is placed in God who does not change. It is here that we begin to see a characteristic sharpening of the belief in the Messiah who is not an ordinary human king but a Son of God in the real sense of the word.

The language also changes, and understandably so. When one criticizes the establishment one cannot afford to do so in plain language, especially when the establishment is in dire efforts to rebuild and restore lost glory. The language inevitably has to be apocalyptic. So, in this book and even in the rest of the books under discussion in this section of the dissertation, the prophecies of doom from earlier prophets who criticized the establishment, no longer come as ordinary plain prophetic oracles but apocalyptic visions and oracles whose meaning is not at once obvious to the person who is not part of the inner circle of the prophets and the communities behind the prophecies.

In Zechariah in particular, the pro-establishment element is perhaps due to the fact that the establishment itself tried to edit the visions introducing a pro-establishment framework but to no avail since the two blocks, Proto-and Deutero-Zechariah, remain united in

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[371] *Ibid.*

their anti-establishment tone. Thus, in the book of Zechariah we infer a background of (a) disadvantaged group(s) in a situation of political crisis. Both Proto- and Deutero-Zechariah are planted on the seedbed of controversy that reflects the thinking of (a) disadvantaged group(s) in a situation of political crisis.[372] In our own terminology, these are people whose estimation of honour has been affected if not eroded seriously.

Zechariah contains numerous allusions to older parts of the prophetic tradition particularly Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel and also allusions to the Pentateuch and Psalms. This vindicates our point that the prophet and his community imported traditions from the past. However, as they responded radically to the onslaught onto their estimation of honour they adopted and adapted the imported traditions to answer and respond to their conditions at the time of redaction. Therefore, M. North's observation is valid. In the book of Zechariah Noth detects one of the origins of apocalypticism, and that is the need to address what in our own terminology is relative deprivation.[373]

When their estimation of honour was affected the prophet Zechariah and his community developed from older parts of the prophetic tradition a theology of hope, which inevitably is eschatological. The vision of the restored Jerusalem, its temple and leadership cannot be fulfilled here and now and this feeds into the concept of a New Jerusalem (which is interestingly discussed at length

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[372] *Ibid.*
[373] *Ibid.*

and developed in the book of Revelation into the concept of a New Heaven and a New Earth). We see in chapters 12-14 a development of the concept of the final Day of the Lord. The subject of the Messiah is picked up and in both sections of Zechariah, the concept appears to grow from the context of leadership failure - human kings have failed dismally and the Messiah comes as the ideal image of leadership.

These ideas are much more developed in Ezekiel and Daniel, but Zechariah is the crucial logical link not only between what we have discussed so far on one hand, and Ezekiel and Daniel on the other hand, but also the book links our argument to the next chapter. In other words there is a sense in which we can understand the experiences of later communities in terms of the experiences of earlier communities and Zechariah is crucial in this respect. Earlier reference already to the Qumran community provides that link.

At this point it becomes necessary to introduce the other tool mentioned earlier but without further elaboration, that is the social scientific tool of "conceptual metaphor". When we defined the term "paradigm" we withheld the definition of "conceptual metaphor" even though we mentioned our intention to use this social scientific tool from the sociology of Knowledge. This was again deliberate because then we were not going to refer to it as much as we referred to the term "paradigm". However, from now on this is a term we will refer to more often and therefore, it is congruent to be elaborate on its definition so that as we proceed with the rest of the discussion we

are clear with our terms and our sociological interpretative endeavour is methodologically valid.

We do not go into details and all the avenues that experts in cognitive linguistics go into. However, we follow these experts in this branch of the sociology of knowledge in their definition of a "conceptual metaphor" as a social scientific tool used to understand one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain, for example, one person's life experience versus another's.[374] A conceptual domain is a coherent organization of experience. In this case we can discern two conceptual domains namely, the Source domain being the domain from which we draw metaphorical expressions and the Target domain being the conceptual domain that we try to understand.[375] Therefore, in the context of our discussion the insinuation here is that the communities of Zechariah and prophets discussed earlier can be taken as conceptual metaphors for the Qumran community and the early Christians especially the community behind the book of Revelation as well as the contemporary millenarian movements in Zimbabwe under study.

Inferences from the Book of Ezekiel
As we argued earlier, deliberately we have refrained from discussing the prophetic book of Ezekiel until now even though chronology may demand that it comes earlier than some of the books we have discussed above. The rationale

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[374] File://A:\Encyclopedia: Conceptual metaphor.htm/November 11, 2004.
[375] *Ibid.*

for its position here is that in terms of style, but what is more important literary genre, Ezekiel is closer to Daniel than any of the books discussed so far. Therefore, we envisage that a discussion of Ezekiel alongside Daniel puts into perspective and necessary completion our hermeneutical key, which is the conceptual metaphor of millenarianism; so much so that all subsequent discussions in later chapters become organized around this conceptual metaphor.

The image and, or, paradigm we have been deducing and are continuing to deduce from the origins of Israelite prophecy and the development thereof reaches maturation in the prophetic books of Ezekiel and Daniel. The paradigm matures into millenarianism, which we take as our Source domain, that we then use to understand our initial target domain the life experience revealed in the book of Revelation, a product of the prophet John, and the community behind the prophet, which we take as the Johanine millenarian movement and later Target domains, contemporary millenarian movements in Zimbabwe namely the Johane Masowe and the Jehovah's Witnesses. So, the two books have been reserved specifically for this purpose to tie all the observations thus far together and to sharpen our basic Source domain, the conceptual metaphor of millenarianism.

Like the books we discussed so far, the book of Ezekiel also has a problem of integrity. There has been a wide-ranging debate concerning the composition and literary style of the book that resulted in lack of agreement on the question of authorship. For example G. Holscher as early as 1924 concluded that only 144 of the 1,273 verses could

be attributed to the ecstatic prophet Ezekiel, while the rest of the book derived from a tedious and legalistic post-exilic priest.[376]

Again we do not allow this debate to carry us over into losing our focus. We note crucial points in the study of the book immediately below. The debate above must have emanated from basic conventional assumptions of Form Criticism namely: all prophecy originally existed orally; the original oracles comprised brief, formulaic utterances; and a change in genre could be taken to indicate a change in author.[377]

Already we have taken a position following Chikafu that each prophet had a support group, a community of disciples or the so called "sons of the prophet" who preserved the utterances of the prophet and transmitted them to later generations of disciples. The "sons of the prophet" may have edited the utterances and gave them a structure that was not necessarily chronological and hence the anachronisms in the prophetic books. In the light of this basic position, we argue as we have done before with the other books above, that the book of Ezekiel derived from the ecstatic prophet Ezekiel. However, like any of the books in the Old Testament, chances are that the book underwent some redaction and possibly behind this redaction is a community of redactors who could be regarded as the "sons of the prophet" Ezekiel who adopted and adapted the utterances of the prophet to suit their conditions then.

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[376] J. Galambush, "Ezekiel: in: *The Oxford Bible Commentary Op. Cit.*
[377] *Ibid.*

In any case, whether the book comes from the sixth century ecstatic prophet Ezekiel or (a) later thoroughgoing redactor(s), does not affect our overall thesis. What is of interest to us is that in the book of Ezekiel we begin to see definite *definiens* of apocalypticism and scholars are therefore unanimous in their label of Ezekiel as an ecstatic prophet. We seek to read behind the *definiens* so as to arrive at the socio-political and economic conditions within which the prophet, and later the community of disciples behind him, operated. We seek also to examine conditions that necessitated the origins of such *definiens*.

The problem of the integrity of the book makes a reconstruction of the historical background of the book complex. However, a holistic reading of the book that we propose above exploiting the widely accepted substantial unity of the book, gives us the necessary confidence to make some valuable inferences. Almost all scholars who review the history of Israel agree in principle that Ezekiel is set in Babylon.[378] However, scholars like J.L. Lindblom raise three possible settings namely, Babylon, Palestine or both Babylon and Palestine.[379] The main argument for

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[378] *Ibid.* (but also cf. J. H. le Reux, "The book of Ezekiel" in *Dialogue with God The Literature of the Old Testament Volume 3* ed. by J. J. Burden and W.S. Prinsloo, Cape Town: Tafelberg Publishers, 1987. p. 176; J. R. Dummelow (ed.), *The One volume Bible Commentary* New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1936 p. 488; R. R. Wilson, *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel.* Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980 p.282. And L. Boadt, "Ezekiel" in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary ed.* By R. E. Brown (et. al) London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1990 p. 306).

[379] J. Lindblom, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel.* Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962 p. 261.

either an exclusive Palestinian setting or a partial one is that many of the speeches and symbolic actions of the prophet seem to have been addressed to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and of Judea rather than to the exiles in Babylon.[380] Lindblom seems to be of the view that the prophet operated in both settings and while noting that conclusions of a Palestinian setting drawn from the oracles addressed to Jerusalem and Judea are generally insecurely based. He then goes on to offer what he thinks is a secure premise for a dual Palestinian and Babylonian setting. He thinks that if we conceptualise properly the nature of revelatory speech we can safely conclude that the prophet proclaims the message that he receives, which can be directed either to personalities and people living at a distance or those immediately around the prophet or both.[381] In any case, there was a fairly lively intercourse between the *golah* (exiles) and the homeland.[382]

Much of what Lindblom says is valid but him and his school miss one crucial point, which we note and magnify for our own purposes that become clear immediately below. The fact that the prophet was addressing Jerusalem while in exile should neither be a vexing one nor should it surprise us. J. M. Dodson's point about the Assyrian and Babylonian aggression policy then becomes handy.[383] It is known, and there is abundant biblical evidence for this,

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[380] *Ibid.*

[381] *Ibid.*

[382] *Ibid.*

[383] J. M. Dodson, "Was Isaiah's Foreign Policy Realistic?" in *Andover Newton Quarterly Volume 12 Number 2,* 1971 p. 86.

that the Assyrians and the Babylonians had a policy of deporting the leadership of defeated nations replacing them with foreign leadership. So, when they captured a nation it was not the general populace that they deported but the leaders and during this time the political leader was the religious leader and vice-versa. So, the prophets belonged to the leadership and this is why they were also exiled. We suspect that this is why in most cases they always advised kings because they knew that in the event that the king developed bad foreign policies they themselves would also suffer the consequences of those policies.

Therefore, Ezekiel's audience in exile are not the general populace but the leadership symbolized in the image of Jerusalem. Thus, when the prophet uses the term Jerusalem it is quite pregnant with meaning referring not just to the inhabitants of Jerusalem but also the ruling class or the establishment. Even the use of the other terms like "idolatry" is not plain but highly symbolic language symbolizing as it were, the decisions and acts of the establishment.

It is not possible to summarize all of the prophet's oracles. We revisit aspects of his symbolic language, visions and vivid extended metaphors. For an easy summary of the prophets' message we accept J. H. le Reux's division of the book of Ezekiel into three main divisions namely, 1:1-24:27; 25:1-32:32 and 33:1-48:35.[384] The first and last

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[384] J. H. le Reux, "The book of Ezekiel" in *Dialogue with God The Literature of the Old Testament Volume 3* Ed. by J. J. Burden and W.S. Prinsloo, Cape Town: Tafelberg Publishers, 1987. p. 176.

divisions are the crucial sections we are more interested in. Ezekiel 25:1-32:32 are basically oracles against foreign nations and for that reason we do not refer to these chapters. The first section comprises visions, symbolic actions and metaphorical oracles concerning Israel, Judah, Jerusalem and the Temple. It is interesting to note that the prophet's call commences with the vision of the throne (1:1-3:15) and it is quite clear that while the prophet generally had a wide audience his major target was the establishment. Together with this vision are symbolic acts related to Jerusalem's fall (3:12-5:17) and when he talks about the judgement of the hills (6:1-14) it seems apparent that the term "hill" is a symbolic designation of the leadership. We need to note that this judgement would be followed by sorrow that cannot be described. We are not far from being correct especially if we consider 8:1-11:25 where it seems the prophet in an ecstatic state was then transported to the temple in Jerusalem in a vision, where he observed the inequalities of the leaders. Two symbolic acts in 12:1-20 describe Yahweh's judgment on the establishment, exile and captivity (12:11).

Following our thesis, Ezekiel, like the prophets we have discussed so far, also imported crucial traditions from the past. In terms of prophetic behaviour and experiences, Ezekiel's prophecy appears to be directly modelled on that of Elijah and Elisha, especially his experience of the "hand of the Lord" as a compelling force (1:3; 3:22 cf. I Kings 18:46; II Kings 3:15) and his ecstatic experience of being physically transported by the spirit (3:12-14; 8:3 cf. I Kings

18:12; II Kings 2:16).[385] However, an analysis of the content of his prophecy shows that the building blocks of his prophecy are key traditions imported from mostly prophets from the eighth to the sixth century.[386] For example, Ezekiel's announcement that "the end (*qets*) has come" is not necessarily a new one as it seems to be an importation of the tradition in Amos 8:2 while the imagery of Israel as dross (22:17-22) appears to be an importation from Isaiah 1:22-25.[387] However, Ezekiel's most striking images appear to be extended meditations on themes imported from Jeremiah with which Ezekiel is most intimately connected.[388] J. Galambush shows this intimate connection in a way that cannot be any clearer. According to him, like Jeremiah, Ezekiel opens with a vision of a "wind", "great cloud...fire flashing forth... and in the midst of the fire... gleaming bronze", most probably symbols for an enemy coming from the North (1:4; cf. Jeremiah 1:13), followed by Ezekiel's eating of the divine scroll (3:1-3) an action styled on the metaphor of Jeremiah 15:16 and like Jeremiah, Ezekiel also has an altercation with false prophets whom Yahweh never called (chapter 13 cf. Jeremiah 23:23-40:29).[389]

However, of particular interest is Ezekiel's treatment of the conceit introduced in Jeremiah 3:6-14 and proverb of "sour grapes" in Jeremiah 31:29. Ezekiel expands the im-

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[385] J. Galambush, *Op. Cit.*

[386] *Ibid.*

[387] *Ibid.*

[388] *Ibid.*

[389] *Ibid.*

age of Jerusalem and Samaria as degenerate sister cities[390] and pronounces judgement on the royal house through a series of interesting metaphors. Once again the traditions from the past are adopted, adapted and or metamorphosed, in line with the living conditions of the prophet and his community. Ezekiel, like the prophets before him, also refers to established symbols of national pride and identity but as he brings charges against Judah and especially the establishment he employs vivid extended metaphors that boil down to irony in a bid to play on and subvert these commonly used symbols.[391] So, Jerusalem is a useless vine (15:1-8), the faithful bride is now a perverse prostitute exposing herself to all passers-by. Judah itself the luxuriant vine has become a dried-up twig and the lion of Judah becomes a rabid man-eater.

It seems also Ezekiel develops a concept we discussed earlier when we discussed the motif of the "eye" in Zechariah. Earlier we argued that the "eye" is an ancient symbol denoting the interpreter and seer presumably imported from the Pentateuch, but in Ezekiel however, emphasis on seeing denotes the prophet's role as a witness of Judah's depravity and Yahweh's acts of self-vindication.[392] In the metaphors that follow, the prophet does not mince his words regarding Yahweh's judgement. First in 18:1-32 he deals with personal responsibility and then in 19:1-14 with the downfall of the royal house. In 20:45-21:32 a number of oracles feature and form critics group these

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390   *Ibid.*
391   *Ibid.*
392   *Ibid.*

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together on the basis of a common catch-word, the "sword" which we take to signify destruction and then in 22:1-31 the downfall of Jerusalem is predicted and the reasons for the destruction are summarized in the anecdote of the twin sisters, *Oholah* (Samaria) and *Oholibah* (Jerusalem). From the description of the sisters' lovers ("warriors clothed in purple" and purple being a royal colour) we can deduce that we are dealing here with the ruling class. So, while Jerusalem might mean the inhabitants of the city the focus of the prophet is the establishment. Therefore, in essence Ezekiel, like Deutero-Isaiah, Zechariah and the rest of the prophets discussed above, was anti-establishment. While earlier prophets like Amos also criticized the Kings, the level at which Ezekiel and company were doing it was now deeper and the dangers involved larger. It was inevitable that Ezekiel and his company became apocalyptic.

It is interesting to note that the earlier association of prophecy with the Spirit or Hand of Yahweh became particularly important especially with the prophet Ezekiel. The prophet received visions when the Spirit of Yahweh possessed him. It seems the Spirit entered the prophet at his call (2:2) and thereafter possessed him from time to time making him see visions and utter oracles and even transporting him from place to place (3:14-15; 22, 24,; 8:1, 3; 11:1, 5, 24,; 33:22; 37:1; 40:1-2).[393] The possession of the prophet may well be viewed as ecstasy even though there are no specific descriptions of trance behaviour.[394] This

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[393]   *Ibid.*
[394]   *Ibid.*

point is significant because possession by the Spirit of Yahweh is a key *definiens* of apocalypticism. Therefore, in Ezekiel, we begin to see clearer signs of apocalypticism than in the books discussed earlier.

What are the factors that originated this apocalyptic thought and discourse? We have already provided a thesis. When one criticizes the establishment one has to be careful. It is easier and safer to do so in symbols and emphasis on the Spirit and, or Hand of God not only legitimates the apocalyptic thought and discourse but also surrounds the prophet and his community with a protective myth.

The living conditions of the exiles, of which Ezekiel was part, are a matter of scholarly debate. However, like the period in Egypt, exile was real *galut* that brought about trauma both at individual and communal levels respectively.[395] Relative deprivation came in various forms for example, loss of family members and homeland, and the ability to maintain communal identity and social structures in Babylon, a foreign land.[396] Unlike in the case of the Egyptian and Exodus experience, the radical response against deprivation in Babylon took a new twist. Ezekiel and his community bore the scars of war and displacement, and many in Babylon were conscripted into forced labour *corvees*[397] and all this should be blamed on the policies of the monarch Zedekiah who seemed to have continued courting illicit alliances (hence the image of Jerusalem as a prostitute) much to the anger of Nebuchadnezzar

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[395]   *Ibid.*
[396]   *Ibid.*
[397]   *Ibid.*

the King of Babylon then.[398] This led to the capture of Jerusalem in 586 BC by the Babylonians who then burned the city.[399]

Ezekiel and his disciples may have been a group of disillusioned Yahwists who found this destruction unbearable as this probably signified a defeat of Yahweh by the Babylonian deities. The prophet and the community of disciples around him then vented their anger on the leadership but in the process prophesying restoration or salvation. It is this prophecy of salvation that is cast in apocalyptic terminology and imagery. The prophet deals with this subject in the third division of the book, which is its last segment (33:1-48:35).

In 33:1-20 we get an emphasis of an image that comes earlier, the image of the prophet as a watchman. It seems as watchman Ezekiel, and the community of the faithful surrounding him, are also witnesses to God' acts of restoration and saving his people. In 33:21-33 he warns of false security but a more interesting text is 34:1-31 where the metaphor of the shepherd and the flocks is used. We are interested in seeing the development of this imagery in the New Testament. In 35:11-15 and 36:1-15 the prophet lays the blocks for his overall presentation of restoration as he deals with the victory of Seir and Israel. The subject of renewal follows this up in 36:16-38 and a grand vision dealing with the unity of the two monarchies Israel and Judah (37:17-28). The theme of the outpouring of the Spirit in 38:1-39:22 is of interest as it introduces not a re-

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398 *Ibid.*
399 *Ibid.*

newal and rejuvenation of prophecy but the dawn of a new era of restoration and salvation. Thus, the subsequent chapters begin to deal with the plans of both the new country or Jerusalem and the new temple (40:1-48:29). It is as if in Ezekiel the foundation is laid for the image of the New Jerusalem, the New Heaven and the New Earth that we find in Revelation especially chapters 21-22.

We are not alone in this observation. Although we do not agree with him wholesale, P. Lee studied the Old Testament books of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and early Jewish literature like 1 Enoch, Tobit, Baruch 2 and 3 and several Qumran sectarian works.[400] He traced the development of the concept of the New Jerusalem or Temple in these earlier works in a bid to see how much the views in these works form a background to the motif of the New Jerusalem in Revelation. His conclusion is not necessary now since we will soon study the book of Revelation, but what is important now is that, like what we are doing here, Lee finds a close link between Ezekiel and the Qumran sectarian works on one hand, and the book of Revelation, on the other hand. This vindicates our point all along that apocalypticism has its roots in Old Testament prophecy and the book is rightfully placed among the prophets even with its largely apocalyptic orientation.

Our other thesis that apocalypticism originates as a radical response to relative deprivation can also be vindicated in part. Indeed as Galambush rightly puts it, the living conditions of the exiled Israelites are widely de-

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[400]   *Ibid.*

bated.[401] However, as we argued earlier exile itself brought about trauma that was *galut* acute enough to equal the experience in Egypt. Ezekiel can be viewed as the figure that articulated the views of those like him who were anti-establishment and represented the *status quo ante*. The result was an apocalyptic or millenarian movement that sought to promote the ideology of a remnant, a faithful few to whom God bestowed a special revelation about the salvation and restoration of Jerusalem and its temple. The spirit of Yahweh or the Hand of Yahweh plays an important role. The word of Yahweh is the means by which the revelation is given through the Spirit. So, Ezekiel here seems to thrive on the Deuteronomic formula "the word of the Lord came home" which, occurs forty-five times in the book.[402]

The anti-establishment tone can be inferred from the judgmental character of Ezekiel's prophecy. As a typical Mosaic prophet Ezekiel is consulted for advice by the Elders of Israel (who perhaps then represented the establishment) but Yahweh did not allow the inquiry and instead Ezekiel is bold only to deliver words of Judgement to the people until the fall of Jerusalem after which the prophet resumed his intercessory role (14:3; 20:1; 36:37-38). This restriction of the Mosaic prophet's intercessory function was perhaps meant to allow judgement to take place.[403]

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[401]   *Ibid.*

[402]   *Ibid.*

[403]   R.R. Wilson, *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel.* Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980. p. 135.

It is possible that Ezekiel and his support group, like Jeremiah, were influenced by the Deuteronomic reforms. As is implicit in 23:45, Ezekiel and his support group belonged, and probably understood themselves as, *anasim tsaddiquim* (the righteous men), perhaps the chosen few, a remnant that would participate in the final judgement on the sinful Israel. It is interesting to note at this juncture that some of the Jehovah's witnesses we interviewed and held wide ranging discussion with, take particular interest in this text as well as everywhere where it is alluded to in the book of Revelation. Their particular interpretation of the text is that as the righteous few they shall participate in the final judgement of the sinful world and they shall in fact bury the bones of the sinful after the final war. We pick this point up later in a later chapter but what is important now is to link immediately the origins of such apocalyptic discourse among the Witnesses with its possible sources in the Bible and also, to begin building our thesis of relative deprivation among the Witnesses.

Wilson is perhaps justified when he argues that such discourse of a chosen righteous few as that of Ezekiel and his support group is often the language used by oppressed peripheral groups that feel themselves to be the only faithful people remaining in their society and who sometimes see themselves suffering vicariously for the larger society (cf. 5:1-4).[404] As has been our argument following Chikafu's thesis, Ezekiel's support group, the guild surrounding him were probably responsible for preserving and editing his oracles even though, as Wilson argues, it is

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[404]   *Ibid.,* p. 222.

quite possible that the prophet himself may have also been involved in the editorial process.[405] Ezekiel's audience must have resisted the message of the group and as the resistance intensified, the group probably withdrew further from society and turned in a decisively apocalyptic direction.[406] Wilson's view is interesting in this regard. According to him the apocalyptic material in 38-39 had the social function of giving the group hope that its reconstruction programme (40-48) would eventually be realised.[407] So, already our view that the apocalyptic ideology sustains the millenarian is not without a base. The view becomes more concrete as we analyse the book of Daniel.

The Prophetic Book of Daniel and brief survey of the Qumran Texts

Much of the material that forms the building blocks of our thesis we have already discussed. In many respects Daniel is similar to the books we discussed so far. The paradigm we have observed and built from the above books recurs in Daniel. However, Daniel intensifies the apocalyptic paradigm so sharply that some scholars, though mistakenly, call it the only apocalyptic book in the Old Testament whose counterpart in the whole Bible is the book of Revelation only. As is apparent now and as we argue below, we have particular problems with this traditional stereotypical view of the book.

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[405] *Ibid.*

[406] *Ibid.*

[407] *Ibid.*

The name Daniel has been a subject for discussion and two main questions have been raised in the discussion concerning why his name is attached to the book namely:

(a)   is it because he is the author of the book that his name is attached onto the book, or,

(b)   Is it because he is the main character of the book?

Both are possibilities because chapters 1 – 6 narrate the story of Daniel in the third person suggesting that he was probably not the author, while in chapters 7-12, Daniel is presented as speaking in the first person suggesting that he was the author.

Whichever way, we look at the authorship and whatever direction we take, one crucial question remains and that is, who was this Daniel and why was his name linked to the book? As argued above two theories can be suggested that are both possibilities. This first theory is the conservative one that is perhaps largely the Judeo-Christian view that the book is true history that contains true prophecy.[408] The chapters 7-12 written in the first person imply that the Daniel of Chapters 1-6 is also truly a historical character that we can take as the author of the whole book.[409] Some scholars have often raised the question if the title of the book is not after the author then who was the author of the book? What was the motive of the person who attached Daniel's name onto the book?

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[408]   L.F. Hartman and A.A. Di Lella, "Daniel" in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*. Ed. By R.E. Brown (et. al.) London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1995. p. 408.

[409]   *Ibid.*

In Ezra 8:2 and Nehemiah 10:7 there is mention of a Daniel who was among the Jews who returned from exile, during the second half of the fifth century B. C. scholars have debated whether this could have been the same Daniel as the author of the book. We cannot easily rule out this possibility.

The other theory, which is the recent view, is that the name Daniel is not necessarily the name of the author but that the book was named after its protagonist. His name may have been linked to the book for this reason and more. As the main character of the story his name may have had some significance in the formulation and presentation of the themes in, and therefore the function of, the book. It is this latter point that makes us take some interest in the name Daniel and his character that is portrayed in the book.

The name Daniel is translated literally to mean, "My Judge is God" or "God judges"[410]. It is probably for this reason that the name is linked to the book because the book pursues the theme of judgement. When we looked at the origins of prophecy particularly as a unique feature of Israelite religion, we argued that one of the factors that make Israelite prophecy unique is the prophets' treatment of the subject of Yahweh's judgement. When we traced the development of prophecy throughout Israel's history the theme of Yahweh's judgement has been a constant feature. In the book of Daniel we see how this theme is concretised and given a universal and eschatological dimension.

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[410]   *Ibid.,* p. 406.

That his name was symbolic and had a place in the formulation and presentation of the author's key themes should not necessarily influence us to conclude that Daniel was therefore a mythical figure or theological construction of the author. One theory is that Daniel was probably some hero from the past. 1 Chronicles 3:1 talks of a Daniel who was David's son and who according to 2 Samuel 3:3 was called Chileab. Ezekiel mentions a Daniel three times; twice together with Noah and Job (Ezekiel 14:14, 20) and another occasion in Ezekiel 28:3 where he is described as a very pious wise man associated with a protagonist of the Ugaritic tale of Aqhat dated in the fourteenth century. This implies that Daniel the protagonist of the book of Daniel was not its author since it is impossible for this Daniel to have lived till the sixth century BC. However, what is more important is that this theory vindicates or thesis in a number of ways. We have already observed a paradigm that is running across the books, that of importing traditions and even prophetic behavioural patterns from the past. Here we note that the symbolic figure, a hero, Daniel is also imported from the past.

With the book of Daniel in particular there is a further interesting point to note in this regard. One of the characteristics of apocalyptic texts is that they are first pseudonymous probably because of the sensitive nature of the issues they deal with, but what is more relevant here, is that second, usually names of important figures from Israel's past history for instance, Adam, Abraham, Enoch, Moses, and in this case Daniel are given as authors of the apocalyptic books possibly to give credibility and authority

to, and hence, quick acceptance of the works. Therefore, in this regard, Daniel marks itself out decisively as an apocalyptic book.

Whatever is our conclusion, an indubitable fact is that Daniel is more than a historical figure; he is also a literary figure with a significant role in the formulation and network of the themes in the book. As Burden observes, the author presents the character of Daniel in a two-fold manner relating to the two-block structure of the book[411]. In the first six chapters the character of Daniel is "flat", that is, Daniel is the main character but "behind the scenes" it is actually God, which implies that Daniel is merely God's understudy or counterpart whose role is to teach the other characters and the reader about God. Interestingly in this section Daniel is presented as a sage par excellence but his wisdom is received through divine revelation. In the second part of the book (chapter 7-12) Daniel's character is presented as "rounded", that is, Daniel is fallible: he is at loss himself and needs to be instructed by heavenly beings and like other mortals he has fears of his own. The character here is rounded so as to help us cope with the suffering and persevere in life[412]. Precisely our interests lie here especially as we link the apocalypticism of Daniel to relative deprivation.

The book of Daniel has been interpreted from three perspectives. The first one is the perspective of prophetic

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[411] Burden in: *Dialogue with God the Literature of the Old Testament Vol. 3*. Ed. By. W.S. Prinsloo, Cape Town: Tafelberg Publishers, 1987. p. 199.

[412] *Ibid.,* p. 205.

eschatology (chapter 1-6). The second one is the perspective of apocalyptic eschatology (chapters 7-12) and the last one is the perspective of both mantic wisdom (chapters 1-6) and cosmic wisdom (chapters 7-12)[413]. We argue that such different perspectives arise due to the confusion we discussed earlier resulting from lack of agreement concerning the precise definitions of the terms eschatology and apocalyptic. From the perspective of our definitions earlier we would not even use the term apocalyptic eschatology. We argue that in the first six chapters that scholars view as being characterized by prophetic eschatology, the author prepares the ground for his apocalyptic thrust in chapters 7-12.

Burden summarizes this very well. According to Burden, in the first part of the book, the tension is development around the characters on earth with repeated 'explanations' of God's role in the drama (of 1:17; 2:28; 3:17; 4:18; 5:11; 6:23) while the narrator and the reader 'objectively' keep their distance. In the second part however the plot reaches a climax with tension existing especially between characters on earth amongst themselves and also between the heavenly characters while the narrator and the reader become deeply involved[414]. What is crucial for us is that the apocalyptic tension is only relieved at the end, in the εσχατον (chapter 12) where God intervenes and saves Daniel and his fellow believers through the supernatural involvement of Michael, the guardian angel of the people of God and throughout this decisive battle and

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[413]   *Ibid.,* p. 199.
[414]   *Ibid.*

suffering the words of comfort remain: "Happy is the man who waits and lives to see the completion... But go your way to the end". The reward will certainly come: "Rest and you shall arise to your destiny at the end of the age" (12:12-13).

It remains clear that God is in control and therefore, while various microforms or genres do appear in Daniel the overarching genre is that of an apocalypse since most of the *definiens* that, as we argued earlier, define the *definiendum* apocalyptic can be deduced from the book. A number of these *definiens* can be listed. First, the language is symbolic and there are numerous veiled references (13, 22; 11:31). It is interesting to note reference to "the abominable thing that causes desolation "(11:31), which is a reference we find also in Mark 13. There are number of animal and plant symbols for example, reference to four beasts, a lion, a bear, a leopard and a terrifying fourth animal without a name in chapter seven. In chapter eight we have reference to a "ram and goat", which make us think about Matthew 25 and the ram with a horn in Revelation. We also have reference to the "tree of Life" in chapter four, a symbol we have in Revelation but can be traced back to Genesis.

Numbers too play a significant role. The number 10 features but a number that has a more important role is the number 7, which we discuss in detail later when we analyse the book of Revelation. We establish a link here between Daniel and Revelation on one hand, and Daniel and the earlier prophets traced as far back as Moses whose spirit was shared among 70 (a multiple of 7) elders who prophesied. Indeed the number 7 has had a symbolic

role in the Semitic minds. While its basic symbolic meaning of completeness runs through from ancient times it has had other designations with a slightly different focus depending on context. For example limitedness or infinity, perfection and finality are some of the slightly different focuses of the symbol.

In Daniel in particular the symbol appears to emphasize finality in two respects, first, that God's judgement will surely come and it is final and therefore second, this evil kingdom will certainly fall and the righteous remnant will certainly be vindicated. This brings us to the second set of apocalyptic *definiens* in the book of Daniel and that is, dualism that also characterizes the book of Daniel. This dualism manifests itself in various respects, for example, a clear periodization of time and space. World history is divided into two aeons, this aeon and the aeon to come. There is a clear doctrine of two kingdoms, the kingdom of God (which is infinite, unlimited and perfect) and the kingdom of man (that is finite and will therefore surely end). Both these ideas are symbolized in the number 7. The citizens of the Kingdom of God who are the children of light likewise constitute the kingdom, and Daniel refers to them as the saints of the Most High (8:9; 23). Presumably the citizens of the other Kingdom are the children of darkness.

We have already mentioned the emphasis on revelation in Daniel and if Daniel is considered an apocalypse it is precisely because of this. The God of Daniel is one who reveals deep mysteries (2:22) but it is to a chosen few, the saints of the Most High, that the revelation is directed. This is typical apocalyptic *definiens*. Another thing, the

end is depicted in terms of a decisive war whose battle-field is not limited to this earth alone. Daniel's doctrine of the Kingdom is therefore key to understanding this idea of the end times. For Daniel the Kingdom of God is the heavenly kingdom while the Kingdom of man is the earthly Kingdom and these kingdoms are in constant conflict. The divine will that is revealed to a chosen few of whom Daniel is part, is to merge the two Kingdoms bringing them into harmony. In other words, God's purpose is to reconcile all things unto him.

In 7:1-27 the four beasts represent four regimes (2:36-40) the most significant being the Macedonian regime and this with the reference to the eleventh horn appears to be a specific focus on Antiochus IV Epiphanes who has slandered the Most High (7:25) and therefore, shall be brought to a fall. However, it is interesting to note that this fall is not just the fall of Antiochus but a cosmic catastrophic end of the current aeon ushering in a new earth (cf. the idea of a new heaven and a new earth in Revelation which we discuss in detail later). Further, paradoxically judgement here on earth takes place in heaven (7:9-10, 14) and therefore, as is typical of apocalypticism, what takes place here on earth is related to the heavenly realm. Human history is the main arena of divine power.

As we noted earlier, the idea of resurrection forms the climax of the apocalyptic drama in Daniel. We discuss this in detail in the next chapter as we make a connection between Daniel and Revelation. Therefore, while various other microforms or genres do appear in Daniel, the over-arching genre is that of an apocalypse. Challenging questions in this regard are: why did the prophet Daniel and

the community behind and around him develop this decisively apocalyptic genre? What factors influenced this development and what is more of our interest, what was the social function and impact of this apocalypticism in Daniel?

Our thesis still stands hence the apocalypse of Daniel and the resultant apocalyptic ideology must have developed as a radical response to relative deprivation. In Daniel the apocalyptic genre became formidable and much more complete because, as we prove below, focus was no longer on the Jewish establishment only but also the imperial establishment. We expand this further when we look at the book of Revelation when we look at the concept of the Son of Man and provide a critique to the image of Antiochus IV that we find in scholarly analyses here.

Indeed, there has never been agreement among scholars regarding the *Sitz-im-Leben* of the apocalyptic literary genre of Daniel. The conservative view is the Judeo-Christian conviction that the book of Daniel is true history containing genuine prophecy. Chapter 7 – 12 are written in the first person singular and some scholars have inferred that the Daniel of chapters 1-6 is a truly historical character who perhaps authored the whole book. Very few scholars nowadays would want to genuinely defend the conservative view. The popular suggestion is that the book of Daniel was written immediately before the death of Antiochus IV Epiphanes around 164 BC. Among other pieces of evidence, the scholars who subscribe to this view cite the questions of language, theology but what is more important to us, the destruction of Jerusalem. Daniel uses

both Hebrew and Aramaic, both languages that are late. The latter is much later than the Aramaic of the Elephantine Papyri which is dated from the end of the fifth century BC and therefore, the sixth century Daniel, the protagonist of the book, would possibly not have been the author. Further, the interest in angelology, apocalyptic vision but what is more important, the belief in resurrection, do point to a period long after the Babylonian exile. This school of thought argues that 9:27 and 11:30-35 refer to the profanation of the temple of Jerusalem and the persecution by Antiochus IV Epiphanes (around 167B.C.) that followed because the descriptions in these verses are quite detailed unlike the general reference to the evil that would come to the wicked man (11:45).

The scholars' argument here appears valid. That the author goes into detail with the profanation of the temple of Jerusalem by Antiochus IV Epiphanes but refers to the evil end of this wicked King only generally. This may imply that the author was probably writing when the events were already taking place hence the detail but only postulated the death of the King. So, a date immediately before his death in 164 BC is proposed as the probable death of writing. If indeed this is the *Sitz-im-Leben* from where the apocalyptic genre of Daniel was born and bred then in terms of deprivation the Jews must have had a repeat of the deprivation that necessitated the exodus. Unlike the books reviewed earlier, the community behind Daniel was not just disillusioned due to failure of their Jewish establishment. The community found itself face to face with the Syrian imperial establishment that seemed to have penetrated the Jewish community and other conquered

people elsewhere. Antiochus IV's anti-Jewish policies that eventually led to the rise of the Maccabean revolt cannot be overemphasized. We can understand how this kind of deprivation so affected the Jews that as part of their strategy towards and during the revolt they inevitably developed of coded language. In other words, it was inevitable that the community became apocalyptic. The significance of symbols and belief such as the belief in the resurrection is that they kept the spirit of the oppressed alive and motivated.

Once again, traditions from the past, heroes from the past and victorious events from the Jewish history were captured and cast in an apocalyptic genre so as to give motivation and hope to a community behind the prophetic book of Daniel. Our apocalyptic or millenarian paradigm becomes more and more sustainable. To borrow E. Lohse's words, the book of Daniel was composed as a writ of consolation for the oppressed community behind the book and, although it becomes more explicit in Revelation, persecution and suffering become signs of the last times, soon to be brought to an end by an act ensuing from the throne of God[415]. The Son of Man imagery that we deal with in detail later becomes critical.

In our conclusion to this chapter it is worthwhile recapitulating the symbols that we think are key to the paradigm of apocalyptic and hence, our conceptual metaphor of millenarianism. The following symbols are of interest to us:

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[415]   E. Lohse, *Op. Cit.*, p. 25.

(a) Horns – as a symbol for power (e.g. Daniel 8:3 – 12; Zechariah 1:18 – 21)

(b) Eyes – as a symbol for knowledge (e.g. Daniel 8:2; Zechariah 1:18; 2;1)

(c) Horses of different colours – as symbols for either different calamities or armies or protective forces (Zechariah 1:7-12)

(d) White robes possibly as symbols of Glory and Purity (Zechariah 3:2-5).

Other symbols include the sharp sword, black colour, crowns, and the horned ram that we have already discussed especially in Zechariah but have refrained from discussing in detail their meanings. We have isolated only the meanings of the symbols that are germane to the exposition of the chapters of the prophetic books in question.

Therefore, our paradigm become firmly established that a situation of *galut* causing serious deprivation arises, a prophet leader arises who articulates the crisis situation and formulates a vision and, or, an ideology from past prophetic traditions, which are metamorphosed and adapted to address the crisis, the vision continues and is adopted and adapted by the prophet's disciples to address further situations of deprivation they later encounter and the irreducible pattern recurs. We summarise our thesis thus far in the form of a flow chart in figure 1 below.

So, even with the Qumran community that we do not discuss in detail the pattern recurs. The general agreement is that the *Hasidim* who joined the Maccabean revolt largely with religious interests gave birth to a community

disciples largely believed to have comprised Essenes[416], who suffered religious deprivation and therefore were seen rebelling against the priestly establishment in Jerusalem. The latter is believed to have adopted the purity code developed by Ezra and Nehemiah to develop a system of classes that sent to the periphery and displaced completely the legitimate holders of the priestly office. In other words, they protested against the monopolisation and hegemony of power from the descendents of the non-Zadokite Menelaus[417]. While at surface value this kind of deprivation was not political, it must be borne in mind that the dichotomy between politics and religion then was tissue thin. As we get into the book of Revelation this observation becomes clearer and the portrayal of the oppressors as villains and children of darkness becomes sharper.

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[416]   R.E. Brown (et. al.), "Apocrypha; Dead Sea Scrolls; Other Jewish Literature," in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary Student Paperback Edition*. Ed. By R.E. Brown (et. al.). London: Geoffery Chapman, 1993. p. 1074.

[417]   *Ibid*.

CHAPTER 4: MILLENARIANISM AND THE EXEGESIS OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION: BACKGROUND ISSUES

Introductory Remarks and General Orientation of the Chapter

In this chapter it is curious to see how we intent to jump from the Old Testament straight to the very last book in the New Testament without, as it may appear, saying a word about the inter-testament and the rest of the New Testament literature respectively that come earlier than the book of Revelation. The contents of the subjects we consider in this chapter, especially those that provide a historical base to our exegesis of Revelation, make the direction we take easily discernable.

In particular, it may be apparent that it is difficult to proceed with a detailed exegesis of Revelation without taking cognisance of key disputes regarding apocalypticism that ensued in the last ten to fifteen years among both Old and New Testament scholars. A consideration of each dispute makes it possible first to revisit relevant Inter-testament and New Testament pieces of literature and second to do a number of other things that make our exegesis of Revelation much more compact. Of interest are four key disputes we discuss briefly below.

First, we have the dispute arising from Hanson's distinction between apocalypse or apocalyptic genre, apocalyptic eschatology and apocalyptic movement. We have already discussed this dispute when we dealt with questions of definition in the relevant chapter.

Second, we have the dispute concerning the place of exilic and post-exilic prophetic books, the majority of which we have already discussed. A number of scholars have raised pertinent questions about these books and the periods that the books cover. For instance, are the exilic and post- exilic periods, periods of decadence? Are they periods of epigones and plagiarists?

Our discussion so far has proven one crucial point, which P.B. Decock puts across succinctly. The prophetic books we have discussed so far are fruits of a rewriting process that is a key characteristic of Israel's literature; one of the characteristics of Israel's literature is that it is the fruit of a regular retelling of the ancient stories in order to address the issues of their contemporary contexts[418]. In our own words, in the Israelite literature, traditions from the past are imported, reworked or metamorphosed and adopted to address contemporary situations.

This, as we state in the previous chapter, is the paradigm we have established thus far. We do not think the book of Revelation is an exception to this paradigm. Therefore, this dispute is important to us in two respects, first, it helps us to put the discussion of exilic and post-exilic literature in the previous chapter into perspective as we provide our own position that the two periods indeed were not periods of decadence nor were they periods of epigones and plagiarists but rather they fall into a long standing tradition and pattern of story telling among the

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[418] P. B. Decock, "The Scriptures in the Book of Revelation" in *Neotestamentica Journal of the New Testament Society of South Africa, 33(2)*, 1999. p. 374.

Israelites that goes back to even the period of the patri-archs. This tradition did not end abruptly but rather it continued into the Inter-testament and New Testament periods respectively. Therefore, second, in the light of this position it is inevitable that we go through the relevant Inter-testament and New Testament literature as we trace the rewriting process, or in our own words, the im-portation of traditions from the past.

However, the third dispute we outline below may be di-rectly relevant to this function. The third dispute concerns the place of Jesus and the earliest Christians in our im-portant paradigm. A popular conception has been to see Jesus and the earliest Christians as a continuation of the Old Testament prophets and standing apart from the apocalyptic tradition[419]. We argue that Jesus is an impor-tant linking piece in our paradigm. He continues from the Old Testament prophets and contrary to this popular view, he does not stand apart from the apocalyptic tradi-tion but rather, in the New Testament he is the apocalyp-tic herald who inaugurates the kingdom of God and de-fines clearly and in full what the prophets like Daniel pre-dicted about the end-times. This dispute certainly takes us through the relevant New Testament texts as we trace par-ticularly the predictions about Jesus from the past and how these and other traditions from the past especially traditions about Jerusalem, are reinterpreted in the book of Revelation to address contemporary situations.

Then finally, we have a fourth dispute which is part of the gist of our thesis. Some scholars would want to see

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[419]   *Ibid.,* p. 373.

the book of Revelation as standing apart from Jewish apocalyptic literature or even as anti-apocalyptic[420]. This final dispute vindicates our earlier endeavour to define terms, but what is more important it helps us to clarify our stance regarding the relationship between Revelation and the books we discussed so far.

Therefore, the title of the chapter shows only what our main focus in chapter is but we are certainly doing much more than what is explicit in the title. The chapter is more than a plain exegesis of the book of Revelation. We provide the necessary link between the book of Revelation on one hand, and the Inter-testament literature and the rest of the New Testament on the other hand.

It is important to note that the disputes singled out above provide the general orientation of the chapter. Thus in the chapter we begin with a historical critical analysis of the book of Revelation, which is quite selective in terms of the subjects isolated for study. We have already incorporated Hanson's distinction between apocalypse as a literary genre, apocalyptic eschatology as a concept and apocalyptic movement as a social movement in our endeavour to define terms. In this chapter we put these earlier discussions to their logical conclusions and also tie any loose ends before the next chapter that seeks to apply our paradigm and conceptual metaphor on selected existing millenarian movements in Zimbabwe.

Further as we exegete the text we take the opportunity to discuss in detail the traditions that the author(s) of Revelation pick(s) from the past; a discussion that has not

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[420] *Ibid.*

been possible earlier when we isolated the traditions from the Old Testament books we discussed so far. It is here that we discuss the dispute regarding the place of Jesus and the earliest Christians *vis-à-vis* apocalypticism. However, what is more crucial to our study is the discussion of the possible reasons why the author(s) of, and, or, the community behind, the book of Revelation adopted the apocalyptic genre. So, the basic task of this chapter is to provide the background to the book of Revelation in a bid to show whether the community behind it arose within the context of deprivation. It is here that we concretise our thesis and establish our conceptual metaphor of millenarianism as we prepare to apply it in the next chapter.

A Historical Critical Consideration of the Book of Revelation

Certainly we are not concerned with all the background issues. We are interested in two strictly related issues of background namely the authorship, which then helps us to establish the possible community behind the book and the possible date of writing of the book, which should help us to establish the possible *Sitz-im-Leben* of the book. Our rationale for this is that our conceptual metaphor is built mainly from these two background questions.

Most of the problems that bedevilled the church of Corinth were a result of the cosmopolitan nature of the community, which this paper has decided to focus on, was that of factionalism.

Authorship

The questions of the authorship and possible date of writing of Revelation have been subject to heated debate among New Testament scholars and even up to now the dispute remains unresolved. The debate has been multifaceted and we take only those dimensions that help clarify our thesis but without necessarily compromising a just treatment of the other views that we tend to treat only in passing.

The majority of the scholars take as their starting point the debate whether or not the book of Revelation should be among the so called Johanine group of writings comprising the Gospel according to John, and the three Johanine letters. To us this too is a logical starting point.

J.L. Houlden notes an observation by some scholars that the place of Revelation among the Johannine group of writings is at best complex, at worst questionable[421]. This school of thought observes that the book of Revelation is not as closely related to the letters as the Gospel is[422]. Therefore, the majority of scholars who belong to this school argue that the Gospel and the letters may have come from the same hand. However, they express serious reservations concerning the book of Revelation, which in their view must not be included among these Johannine writings.

The reservation that we express ourselves in fact moves in the other direction. Below we argue that the comparison of Revelation on one hand, and the Gospel of John

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[421]   J.L. Houlden, *The Johannine Epistles* Oxford: Mowbray, 1975. p. 1.
[422]   *Ibid.*

and the letters on the other hand, may reveal striking similarities in Christology and certain theological concepts that provide us with not only a rationale to include Revelation among the Johannine literature but also a basis for deducing and establishing common authorship with reasonable concreteness. We demonstrate this point through a brief comparison largely between the Gospel and the book of Revelation but where appropriate we refer also to the letters.

It is striking that the author of Revelation considered his book as Αποκαλυψις Ιησου Χριστου ([the] Revelation of Jesus Christ). If as one scholar argues, we look at the genitival reference to Jesus Christ, Ιησου Χριστου, both in its objective and subjective senses, we deduce that Jesus Christ is the "revealed" and is himself the "revealer" of the revelation[423]. This is the very essence of the argument in John 1:1-12.

Further, in both Revelation and the Gospel Jesus Christ is referred to as the Word of God. We are aware that this is a point of dispute. In the Gospel "the word" is nominative, ο λογος του Θεου whereas in the texts cited in Revelation "the word" is in some other cases other than nominative, for instance dative, τω λογω του Θεου (Revelation 1:2) and genitive, του λογου του Θεου (Revelation 2:9). Thus the connection between Jesus Christ and the "the word" in Revelation is not at once obvious. It is from this perspective that some scholars have argued that what we see here is an attempt to forge an unnecessary connection

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[423]   F.J. Botha, "The Revelation To John" in *NTE 203 Guide 1* Pretoria: UNISA, 1975. p. 53.

between Jesus and "the word" in a bid to establish striking similarities between Revelation and the Gospel since the latter has direct references to Jesus as "the word of God"[424]

However, such a criticism may not be warranted because first, we do have texts in Revelation where Jesus is referred to explicitly as ο λογος του Θεου and in the nominative. For example Revelation 19:13

Και κεκληται το ονομα αυτου ο λογος του Θεου (And the name by which he is called is The Word of God)

So, in the Gospel the author develops towards the association between Jesus Christ and the Word. In Revelation "The Word of God" becomes an Christological title; it becomes a name of Jesus. The connection between Jesus Christ and the Word of God becomes much more explicit and concrete. Thus, it is not a fair critique to say that it is only in the Gospel that we have direct references to Jesus Christ as the Word of God.

Second, there are even more striking similarities in Christology than this connection between Jesus Christ and The Word of God. In Revelation 21:6 Jesus Christ is referred to as the Αλφα suggesting that either he is the beginning (αρχη in John 1:1) of all things or he was there at the beginning (since αλφα is the first letter of the Greek alphabet) or both. This designation summarizes John 1:1-3 where Jesus Christ is described both as eternal and the beginning of all things. It is interesting here that this is what we see also in 1John1:2.In Revelation 21:6 and 22:17

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[424] L. T. Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament,* London: SCM Press, 1986. p. 519.

Jesus Christ is referred to as the "fountain of life for those who thirst" and this is the suggestion in John 4:10 in particular. L.T. Johnson[425] summarizes well these similarities in Christology between the book of Revelation and the Gospel and we highlight only those similarities we have an interest in. Jesus is king and even King of Kings (1:5, 15:3, 19:16, cf. John 18:29-19:22). He is also the faithful witness (1:5, 3:14, 19:11, cf. John 5:32, 8:14, 1John 5:9). Two interesting designations for the Jesus Christ that Revelation shares with the Johannine writings are "the one who comes" (1:4,8; 2:5; 3:11 cf. John 1:19; 11:27; I John 4:2; 5:6; II John 7) and reference to Jesus Christ as the sacrificial lamb. We discuss the latter designation in detail later and therefore, it is sufficient to mention it only in passing here.

Apart from these, there are designations that are, according to Johnson,[426] unique to Revelation, John and the letters. For instance, as we stated earlier, Jesus is "the beginning" ($\alpha\lambda\phi\alpha$ as in Revelation and $\alpha\rho\chi\eta$ as in John) of God's creation and also "the end" (21:6; 22:13 CF. john 1:1-2; I John 1:1). Jesus identifies himself with the "I am" sayings (1:8, 17; 2:23; 21:6; 22:13, 16; cf. John 6:35; 8:12). He refers to "my Father" (2:28; 3:5, 21; cf. John 5:17, 43; 14:2) and "my God" (3:2, 12; cf. John 20:17). He has received authority from the Father, which in turn gives (2:26-28; cf. John 1:12; 17:2). He is the "Amen" (3:14; cf. John 1:51; 5:19). He is the light of the New Jerusalem (in Revelation) or the world (in John) (21:24; 22:5; cf. John

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[425]   *Ibid.*

[426]   *Ibid.*

8:12; I John 2:8). These designations appear peculiar to these writings and this is a point worth considering when we contemplate the inclusion of Revelation among the Johannine group of writings.

Not only do we have similarities in Christology that are striking, but also features of common theological orientation. For example, there seems to be an understanding that temple is no longer necessary for worship (21:22; cf. John 4:21). Further, D. Guthrie observes what he calls "a noticeable love for antithesis"[427] or, what we perceive as some kind of dualism, for example, light versus darkness (8:12; cf. John 1:5; 3:19; I John 1:6-7). Besides, there is some fundamental metaphorical connection between Jesus and life (2:10; 3:5; 11:11; 22:2, 14, 19; cf. John 1:4; 3:15; I John1:2); Jesus and light (21:24; 22:5; cf. John 1:7-9; 8:12; I John 2:8) and Jesus and water (21:6; 22:1, 17; cf. John 4:14; 7:37-39). He is the one who gives to the thirsty water to drink from the fountain of the water of life.

In the light of such striking similarities between Revelation on one hand, and John and the letters on the other hand, some scholars are of the resolve to include Revelation among the Johannine group of writings. This suggestion does not give us much trouble and for that reason we do not debate it. For this reason too we do not trace the position from A. von Harnack the main propounder of the theory through the long history that entails the interpretation of Papias's statement on this subject that was

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[427] D. Guthrie, *Introduction to New Testament* London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1970. p. 259.

then debated seriously by scholars like J.R.W. Scott[428]. What gives us trouble and therefore what we debate in detail is what the scholars proceed to conclude from this position. From this position this school proceeds to make proposals concerning common authorship of the writings. Others have gone further to infer apostolic authorship of the writings deriving such a conclusion from, and concretising it with reference to, Revelation.

One scholar, who does not seem to see any problem with first, common authorship, is Guthrie. For him Revelation 1:7 and John 19:37 cite from a common variation that differs from the Septuagint implying a common author[429]. However, what he thinks strengthens his argument more is the fact that the expression ο λογος του Θεου denoting Jesus Christ is used nowhere else in the New Testament except in Revelation and the Johannine literature.[430]

Other scholars go a step further than this to even suggest apostolic authorship and according to them, while the book of Revelation may be apocalyptic in its genre, tone and content, it differs with Jewish apocalyptic patterns in that it is not ascribed to an ancient name like Enoch, Ezra, Baruch or any other ancient name. The author clearly identifies himself as John (1:9). He is an authority in himself who is clearly known by the seven churches in Asia and is fully acquainted with the history of the church, a man of considerable authority who could

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[428] *Ibid.*

[429] *Ibid.*

[430] *Ibid.*

expect the churches to whom he wrote to receive what he wrote as a revelation from God[431]. In support, Guthrie argues that such a departure from the precedent and such assumed authority demanded an author of such stature as that of an apostle whose authority and leadership was naturally acknowledged and accepted by all in the churches[432]. Therefore, so the school concludes, the John in 1:9 must have been John one of the apostles of Jesus Christ. This John must have been the author of the Johannine writings including Revelation.

This school further utilizes external evidence to buttress their view. According to the school, the Church Fathers, Justin (middle of the second century), Irenaeus (end of the second century), Origen (ca.185-253/4), Tertullian (ca 160-220) and Hippolytus (ca.170-235) clearly witnessed to their belief in apostolic authorship.[433]In fact, the Church Fathers assumed the apostolic authorship of these writings without discussion. The logic of this school of thought is that, the John of Revelation had so much authority that all would naturally accept his leadership and this implies that he was a very important figure in the church. If another John who was not an apostle had risen to such a position of great importance in the church, the Church Fathers must have known him and should have taken a lot of care to distinguish between the two Johns. That the Church Fathers did not do so implies that either they did not know this other John who was not an apostle,

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431   *Ibid.*
432   *Ibid.,* p. 257.
433   F.J.Botha, *Op. Cit.*

a thing that is impossible since he was an important figure in the church, or simply this second John if ever he existed was not the author of the Johannine writings.

We do follow the logic of this school of thought. However, upon serious scrutiny the position of this school has its own serious flaws. On a technical level, that Revelation 1:7 and John 19:37 cite from a common variation does not necessarily imply common authorship. Rather, from a source critical perspective we may postulate that the two authors may have used the same source. Also, the fact that the expression Ο λογος του Θεου referring to Jesus Christ is used nowhere else in the New Testament does not necessarily imply common authorship. This may have been a view commonly held and hence, an expression generally used within a school of thought or a Johannine group of Christians. Besides, it should be puzzling that the author of Revelation clearly identifies himself as John who refers to himself as a prophet (1:9). Nowhere in the book of Revelation does this author refer to himself as "an elder" as is the case in II John1 and III John1.We are aware of the theories that suggest that "the prophet" John in Revelation was one and the same person as "the elder" who is the supposed author of the Johannine writings. The main propounders of this line of argument are traced back to A. von Harnack who argued that the author of Revelation originally wrote the Gospel of John in Aramaic and subsequently it was translated into its present form[434]. Harnack uses this argument also to account for

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[434]   N. Turner, "Revelation," in *Peake's Commentary On The Bible*, Ed. By M. Black (et. al.). London: SCM Press, 1962. p. 1045.

the fact that the Greek of Revelation differs in style from that of the rest of the Johannine writings, yet there are very striking theological similarities among these writings.[435]

A number of scholars have since followed Harnack in this argument. This school of thought arrives at their position that the prophet of Revelation was one and the same person as the elder in say, II John1 and III John1, through an interpretation of a key datum from Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History (39 of Book 3). In this section Eusebius deals with an exposition from one of the Church Fathers, Papias the then Bishop of Hierapolis. Since this exposition is key to the position of this school we cite it verbatim and here we rely on C. Soayman's translation of the quotation:

> But if anyone arrives who has been a follower of the presbyters I would enquire about the words of the presbyters, what Andrew or what Peter said, or what Philip, or what Thomas or James, or what John or Matthew or any other of the disciples, and things which Ariston and John the presbyter, disciples of the Lord say.[436]

In the statement Papias mentions John twice introducing some ambiguity concerning whether or not it was his intention to distinguish between John the apostle (who is mentioned first with the other apostles) and John the elder (who was mentioned at the end together with Ariston who was clearly not an apostle). Harnack and the rest

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435   *Ibid.*

436   C. Soayman, "The Gospel according to John," in *NTE 203 Guide 1* p. 14.

of the school of thought that follows him build on Euse-
bius' assessment of Papias to conclude that Papias had no
intention of distinguishing between the two Johns. Ac-
cording to Eusebius the ambiguity arises from the fact
that Papias was a man of exceedingly small intelligence"
(Historia Ecclesiae iii.39:3) and C.H. Dodd called him "an
uncommonly clumsy writer."[437]

We are not sure whether this position which is clearly
based on a fallacy, *argumentum ad hominem* (both abusive
and circumstantial), is acceptable. Neither are we sure
whether or not we are able to measure Papias' intelligence
nor to determine whether or not by the standards of the
time Papias' style was clumsy. We think we can arrive at
the same or different position as that of this school of
thought without necessarily appealing to Papias' person.
Hence we call for a renewed attempt at exegeting Papias'
statement.

A fresh analysis of Papias' statement allows us to pro-
ceed in several directions and indeed arrive at several po-
sitions but our interests lie in only one position that leads
to apostolic authorship. The position is the same as that of
Eusebius and the Dodd school of thought, but the schol-
ars who subscribe to this view like J.R.W. Stott, arrive at
this position in a logical process that clearly avoids the
fallacy that we mentioned and therefore their argumenta-
tion is much more acceptable.

This line of thinking is that the term presbyter should
be restricted to the apostles, which implies that the elder
in II and III John was John the apostle of Jesus Christ.

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[437]   J.R.W. Stott, *The Epistles of John* p. 36.

The ambiguity in Papias' statement arises from the fact that as he wrote Papias had three categories of people in mind namely, disciples in general, apostles who are specifically elders and, whether these disciples or apostles are dead or they are still alive.[438]

All three categories however, had one thing in common; these people were disciples of the Lord. Stott would want to add that they were disciples of the Lord who had known him in the days of his flesh,[439] that is, they were eyewitnesses. We are satisfied only with the contention that they were disciples. We cannot be certain from the quotation whether or not they were all eyewitnesses. Thus, John is mentioned twice because he fell in the intersection. Papias mentions him together with Andrew and the other apostles because he was an apostle and therefore an elder. Papias then mentions him again with Ariston, a disciple who was still alive because John too was still alive. So, in Papias' mind there were no two Johns really. Therefore, following this line of thinking, John the author of the letters and the Gospel is John the apostle.

From this conclusion, this school of thought then utilizes a common tradition to then link the author of the Gospel and the letters on one hand with the author of Revelation on the other hand. Common tradition argues that one had to be an apostle to be recognized as a prophet and vice-versa[440]. Perhaps from the perspective of

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[438]   *Ibid.*

[439]   *Ibid.*

[440]   G. Yolke, lecture, U.Z., 1 September, 1992.

this common tradition the scholars take Didache 11:3 to imply that the office of the apostle was the same as that of a prophet especially with the absence of a definite article between αποστολων and προφητων. Therefore, that the author of Revelation refers to himself as a prophet while the author of the other Johannine writings refers to himself as an elder can be understood from this perspective. The two titles, prophet and elder could refer to one and the same figure.

However, we note some critical weaknesses in this theory. First, the argument for a link between "prophet" and "elder" based on the definite article is not easily sustainable. For example, in chapter 7 of Didache verse 1 the author uses the definite article but in verse 3 of the same chapter the definite article is absent. This implies that the author was quite flexible in his use of language but he did not think that this necessarily affected his theological perception. Second, if indeed the author of Revelation was the apostle or elder John, he should have mentioned this several times, judging from the weight that this title probably carried, (note how many early Christian writings bare the names of the apostles even though the apostles are not necessarily the authors of the writings). Third, as we discuss later, Revelation displays a Christology that is transcendental, a feature of a much later period, probably beyond AD85. So, if the author of Revelation was indeed John the apostle, then he must have lived to a considerably old age. Of course the scholars who subscribe to this theory argue, or at least assume, that the apostle was still alive by the time Revelation was written but really there is no basis for such an assumption. In fact, the as-

sumption is necessitated by the need to argue for the apostolic authorship of the Johannine writings. To then use this assumption as a premise for the conclusion that John the apostle was the author of the writings would be to argue in a circle or begging the question.

Besides, Papias was from the same region to which the seven churches addressed in Revelation belonged[441] and somehow he should have mentioned at least clearly the relationship of the apostle and these seven churches. Also, he should have hinted on the age of John and probably mentioning his prophetic role.

Otherwise an analysis of the content of Revelation in particular militates against any suggestion for apostolic authorship. There are no individual traits in Revelation and the rest of the Johannine writings that show the author to be a companion of Jesus. Must he have gone into such a transcendent Christology? An analysis of the Christology of the Revelation, let alone the rest of the Johannine writings shows that this Christology is not traditional and therefore characteristic of an apostle of Jesus, a Palestinian Jew. For example, reference to Jesus as a "lamb slain but now lives" (Revelation 5:6) according to M. Hengel was common during the second century AD and was typical of Hellenistic Christology[442]. Hengel sees Hellenistic Jewish Christians as creative giants who coined the idea of Christ dying for the sins of the world,

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[441] J. Moffat. "The Revelation of St. John The Divine" in *The Expositor's Greek Testament, vol. 5,* p. 323.

[442] M. Hengel, *The Cross Of The Son Of God.* London: SCM Press, 1981. p. 232.

that is, the concept of the sacrificial death of Christ. Further, reference to Jesus as the beginning and end of creation (Revelation 3:14; 21:6; 22:13; John 1:1-12; 1 John 1:1) may betray a Christology that is more Hellenistic than Palestinian especially when Matthew, who is assumed to be writing from an orthodox Palestinian Jewish perspective, is only interested in tracing the genealogy of Jesus back to Abraham and not to the beginning of creation.

Apart from these Hellenistic elements in the Christology of the writings, there are other typically Hellenistic elements that militate against apostolic authorship, for instance, the suggestion that the temple is no longer necessary for the worship of God (Revelation 21:22; John 4:21). An apostle of Jesus would have problems endorsing such an idea. To appreciate the validity of our point here, one needs to be reminded of the stoning of Steven and the reasons for this (Acts 7:54-60) and the fact that although the apostles were a group of Galileans, immediately after the ascension of Jesus they went to reside in Jerusalem and remained there even though persecution became rife (Acts 8:1). Of course, viewed from a redaction critical perspective, the tendency to stay in Jerusalem could be explained in terms of Luke's tendentiousness as he pursued one of his themes of Jerusalem as the base of operation of the Church. However, Paul also confirms that the apostles, or at least the pillars, resided in Jerusalem (Galatians1:18; 2:1ff). So, going by the criterion of multiple attestations we may take the record in Acts as correct. If this is correct, then from it we may infer that the apostles of Jesus probably still attached some theological significance to Jerusalem, the city where the tem-

ple was. Even though by then the temple had been destroyed, at least they still upheld it and other elements as basic features of their Jewish heritage. Therefore, the unison voice of the Church Fathers regarding apostolic authorship is not an argument at all especially if we consider also the interest of the Church Fathers in apostolic continuity.[443]

What remains a strong argument is perhaps the argument for common authorship. However, we still add a critical dose to the analysis of this view and then derive from it our own position. Some scholars arrive at this position mainly, as we stated earlier, on the basis of common elements of Christology between Revelation on one hand and John and the letters on the other hand. Already we have outlined in reasonable detail most of these striking similarities. At this juncture we revisit some of these similarities in order to bring to surface differences of Christology between the two groups of writings, that is Revelation on one hand and John and the letters on the other hand; differences that only become apparent upon closer analysis of the fine details of the Christology of the writings. The differences are what persuade us to mark a point of departure.

Some textual critics begin from a starting point slightly different from ours but still raise the same critique as ours. They take as their starting point an analysis of the style and vocabulary of the writings and according to them when we look at Revelation and the Gospel in particular, there is no doubt that the style and vocabulary distinguish

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[443] J.L. Houlden, *Op. Cit.* p. 4.

between the two unambiguously[444]. Indeed according to this school the distinctive characteristics of Revelation are less vividly felt because of translation, in particular successive versions obliterate most of the exceptionally numerous and glaring irregularities of the book's syntax that mark it off from not only the rest of the Johannine literature but also the rest of the early Christian literature[445]. Further even the idiosyncrasies in conception that mark it off from the rest of the early Christian literature, especially the fourth Gospel, become less visible as we move away from the original, for example, the now known resemblances between the lamb and the word λογος are both specious and secondary[446].

We are particularly interested in this latter point. Our focus is not so much on the disjunction based on the style and vocabulary more than it is on the disjunction in thought or conception, especially Christological conception between Revelation on one hand, and the Gospel and the letters on the other hand. We argue that some of the similarities in Christology cited earlier may prove specious upon closer analysis. To vindicate our point we get into an analysis of a few examples.

In the Gospel Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29, 36). In this conception Jesus' activity is located in the world and this is consistent with the evangelist's conception of Jesus as the λογος. That the word became flesh and dwelt among the people

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[444] J. Moffat, *Op. Cit.* p. 320.
[445] *Ibid.,* p. 321.
[446] *Ibid.*

(John 1:14) becomes a key distinguishing feature of the Gospel that locates Jesus' activity in this world. The statement that comes with the idea of Jesus being flesh vindicates our point. He came into that world even though the world did not know him. Although scholars like J. Moffat argue that in John the κοσμος is always used spiritually[447] (we prefer the term symbolically) and not physically, we contend that the author(s) intended both meanings and the physical connotation was dominant.

Apart from this, the lamb in the Gospel is gentle, peaceful and defenceless. As he rides into Jerusalem he rides onto a donkey symbolising peace and in his gentle defenceless self he is led to the slaughter. Thus, the overall picture is that of Jesus Christ who is wholly a sacrificial lamb that takes away the sins of the world.

In Revelation however, we get a slightly different picture. Still Jesus Christ is a lamb but it is clear he is a Lamb of God once slain but now lives (Revelation 5:12-13) and he was received in order to receive power. He indeed received the power and now sits on the throne. His activity is clearly located in the heavenly realm. This is consistent with the rest of the Christological imagery. For instance, in John we note that reference to Jesus' activity, as Son of Man in the heavenly realm is future:

> "...You shall see the heavens opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

However, in Revelation 14:14 Jesus is "one like a Son of Man" seated on a cloud with a golden crown on his head.

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[447] *Ibid.*

As the Lamb of God he is no longer a gentle defence-less sacrificial lamb. In Revelation what is consistently impressed upon the mind of the reader is the image of a warrior Christ and we are consistently reminded of three key qualities of the Lamb namely, the wrath of the Lamb, the might of the Lamb and the victory of the Lamb.

Unlike in the Gospel where the word is a life giving word of God, the source of eternal life (note how αιωνιος is almost always used with ζωη and in connection with the λογος in Revelation Jesus is the word of God dipped in blood (Revelation 19:13). He rides on a horse signifying war. He makes war.

This contrast comes out even with the other Christ-tological images. For instance, in the Gospel Jesus Christ is the Son of God who is the source of eternal life to those who believe in his name (John 3:15, 16; 6:35; 7:38; 11:25; 12:44; 14:1, 12; 16:9; 20:31)[448]. However, in Revelation he is the Son of God with eyes like a flame of fire and one who is a judge with a sword in his hand. It would appear as if the crown on his head and the image of horns signify a king on the throne in charge of a kingdom. While in John Jesus Christ is the king of the Jews even though his kingship is not of this world (John 18:35) in Revelation he is the ruler of all the kings of the earth and he is the "Lord God Almighty...King of the ages" (Revelation 15:3). We are reminded here of the three key qualities of the lamb we mentioned earlier. So, Jesus' kingship moves from a

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[448] P. Perkins, "The Gospel According to John," in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary Student Paperback Edition* London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1993. p. 948.

local one to a transcendental, cosmic and eternal kingship in Revelation.

While indeed both the Gospel and Revelation talk about judgement it is not in the same sense and therefore, Jesus Christ's Christological function as judge is different too. Moffat is correct when he observes as we do that in John judgement is inward while in Revelation it is outward and dramatic[449]. This point does not come out clearly if we do not also refer to the contrast in the conception of the Holy Spirit. In the Gospel the Holy Spirit is viewed as the *Paraclete*, the inward comforter who brings about self-evaluation and judgement, whereas in Revelation the Holy Spirit is wholly prophetic, pronouncing statements of judgement in a dramatic way. This is quite consistent with the title the author gives to himself, John the prophet.

Therefore, in the instances cited above and others we have not cited, the resemblances in Christology between the Gospel and the letters on one had, and Revelation on the other hand, may be merely verbal. Some scholars have gone further than this to conclude that the Christological conceptions were adapted from different soils in pre-Christian Judaism and for alien ends[450]. However, we think we may gain some thrift from this critique and the suggestion of common authorship we are pursuing thus far.

The critique immediately above vindicates the point we have been making all along and which forms a significant

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[449]   J. Moffat, *Op. Cit.,* p. 322.
[450]   *Ibid.,* p. 131.

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part of our thesis that one of the key characteristics of Israel's literature is that it is the fruit of a regular retelling of ancient stories in order to address issues of their contemporary contexts. We have established a paradigm thus far along this line of thinking. In our view, within Israelite literature we notice an adaptation of traditions from the past that are metamorphosed to address contemporary situations. Moffat and his school of thought agree with us here. As we observe above, according to this school the Christological images in John and Revelation were adapted from pre-Christian Judaism although from different soils and for different reasons. However, we have reservations with part of their observation but agree with them totally in their suggestion that the Christological images were imported from the past. We clarify our reservations as we bring in the debate on common authorship.

The suggestion of common authorship becomes interesting in the light of the striking differences in Christology, which we outlined above. We do have a paradoxical situation, which calls for caution in the manner in which we proceed from here. The gospel and Johannine letters are strikingly similar to and yet strikingly different from, the book of Revelation in terms of Christology. In our view this paradox can be explained from the perspective of common authorship but then the author was not a single author. The works especially the Christological images must have come from the same soil. This means we differ in opinion from the Moffat school of thought here. We are more comfortable with the view that probably these

writings came from the same community, the Johannine community.

In other words, the book of Revelation came as the other production of the circle or school of Johannine Christianity following the Gospel and the letters[451]. That the works came from the same creative milieu of thought and expression such as contemporary writers belonging to the same school or Asiatic Christian community[452] explains the striking similarities discussed in detail above. However, the differences in Christology in particular are also so clearly cut that it is evident the works were not written by the same author within a few years of each other. What is probable is that perhaps the Gospel and the letters were written first and probably too by the same author. This author may or may not have been "the beloved disciple" but we accept the view that the community of this author was the Johannine community that, according to R.E. Brown, must have owed its existence to a follower of Jesus whom they called "the beloved disciple"[453].

Brown has done a very good job describing the basic constituents and morphology of this community and therefore it may not be necessary to get into that kind of exercise again. However, we utilize the point he makes throughout that this community was ever changing in its conception of things as the environment they lived in also was changing. The Gospel was written in a narrative genre and the letters in epistolary genre and that was ap-

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[451]   L.T. Johnson *Op. Cit.* p. 519.
[452]   Moffat *Op. Cit* p. 321.
[453]   R.E. Brown *The Community Of The Beloved Disciple* p. 23.

propriate then. When the book of Revelation was written certain transformations had taken place within the community that required the genre of apocalypse[454]. The same traditions and Christological images used in the Gospel and the letters are used but they are metamorphosed to address the transformations in the community and its specific needs then. This explains the differences. This completes the picture we have begun painting in the previous chapter and which we continue painting in the next paragraphs. Since the circumstances that necessitate the apocalyptic genre are a subject of detailed discussion later, what we have said here suffices as background data concerning authorship, but what is more important, the discussion thus far suffices as building blocks to a part of our paradigm which we began building in the previous chapter.

In the light of Chikafu's critique of von Rad's view of a prophet as a loner, we may take John as a prophet who was surrounded by a guild, a community of disciples who acted as a support group, but this community of disciples did much more than just providing material and moral support. They were also thickly involved in the processing of the prophecy coming from the father of the guild. So, we have a critical note to add onto the characterization of a prophet.

Von Rad is right when he describes the prophet as a creative individual who possessed a unique knowledge of Yahweh and his designs for Israel and in Chikafu's words, as one who engaged in a unique dialogue with Is-

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[454]   L.T. Johnson *Op. Cit.*

rael's past history. We add that the prophet's creativity was not his alone. It was embedded into, and enhanced by, the creativity of the community. In our view, during the transmission of the prophet's preserved oracles the community of disciples' creativity added onto the oracles other building blocks that continued from the old traditions, and even transformed the old traditions in a way that met the contemporary needs and challenges of the community. This becomes particularly true of the Johannine community.

As we state earlier Brown did a splendid job to characterize this community and we do not think we can be any better than him in this job. However, some of his findings may be useful to sharpen further our own perspective here. Our suggestion of common authorship assumes that John the figure behind these works may have been the apostle and may or may not have been the elder of the letters. Whoever this John was he was the creative giant behind the traditions common among the Johannine writings. These traditions were shared within the Johannine community[455]. In the Gospel and the letters, works that came earlier than the book of Revelation, the community harnesses the traditions to promote love and unity. Brown correctly points out that the context of earlier writings was probably the schism within the community with the de-

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[455]   Thus, in a way we agree with Brown's argument that behind these writings we see a community that owed its existence to a follower of Jesus whom they called "the beloved disciple".

velopment of docetic thinking among some of the disciples of the figure John[456].

The reasons for the schism may be many and varied but almost all scholars who try to characterize this community agree in principle that part of the community comprised Jews of an anti-temple bias who made converts in Samaria and according to Brown it is the acceptance of these Jews and their Samaritan converts that catalysed the development of a high, pre-existent Christology that led to debates whether this part of the community was not abandoning Jewish monotheism by creating a second God out of Jesus[457]. D.L. Barr adds that the influx of the Samaritans into the community changed the direction of the thinking of the community[458]. There was a lot of creativity that introduced a paradigm shift in Christological thinking. For instance, the Samaritans rejected the Davidic monarchy and the prophetic writing associated with it and therefore they did not expect a revival of that monarchy through a new Davidic king.

Thus, the concept of Jesus as Son of God acquired a new meaning that cast him as a cosmic figure that was pre-existent and eternal. The miracles in the Gospel are signs to prove that Jesus was the eternal God in the world doing things God does all the time and this was the essence of his mission (John 17:3). The Christology became philosophical and drew from Hellenistic Philosophy.

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[456] R.E. Brown, *Op. Cit.*

[457] D.L. David "Nature of the Johannine community" in www.wright. edu/Barr 20 April; 2005.

[458] *Ibid.*

Other radical and complex Christological views developed. The community largely accepted the view of the Hellenists who as argued earlier were creative giants who came up with the concept of dying for other people's sins. Thus, the tradition of Jesus as a sacrificial lamb became prominent and entrenched. The dualism between light and darkness also became prominent. The secessionists were the children of darkness who were basically liars and "anti-Christs" and this is why they had gone out of the community. Those who remained within the community were the children of God who knew the truth or light (I John 2:19f).

However, at this stage tension was largely within the community and the challenge was to promote love and unity so as to counter a further split. However, when Revelation was written, the community had become a sect following pretty much the same conditions we have identified at the beginning as we introduced our paradigm of millenarianism. A radical change in socio-political and economic conditions then resulted in the community altering its Christological traditions to suit their situation. The narrative (the Gospel) and the epistolary genres too were no longer sufficient to address these conditions. The traditions and genres were inevitably transformed to the apocalyptic genre that drastically reshaped the worldview of the community. A prophetic figure had to arise who interpreted the conditions of the community in a mode that was radically apocalyptic but as we argue earlier that drew from prophecy. We take this opportunity to get into the setting that probably resulted in the transformation of

the Johannine community into a typical millenarian movement.

As we do this we are indeed aware of the kind of problem that some scholars have raised concerning our argument and paradigm at this juncture. Some scholars have serious problems with regarding Revelation as a prophecy. These scholars include Von Rad whom we have discussed in detail earlier, E.S. Fiorenza L.T. Johnson, E.D. Freed and recently although to a smaller scale. D. De Silva. The essence of this school's argument is that to regard Revelation as prophecy results in gross misinterpretation of the book. The scholars above whom we have taken as representatives of this school demonstrate some variations in the fine details of their observations that are typical of this school of thought. We selected these three scholars as representatives because despite their critical observations regarding the prophetic nature of Revelation, each of the scholars has one or two points that we use to establish our point of departure and concretise further our paradigm and conceptual metaphor of millenarianism.

As we discussed earlier, von Rad distinguishes between apocalyptic and prophecy and for him the apocalypticists' concern is with the events of the end time while prophets concentrate on the historical course of events. We mention this again because von Rad's view here appears to be the basis of a distinction between apocalyptic eschatology and prophetic eschatology that we are also disputing below on the same ground that we disputed von Rad's suggestion. Fiorenza argues along the same lines as von Rad and is convinced that Revelation cannot be considered as

prophecy or to be specific as part of early Christian prophecy but as a Christian apocalyptic document[459]. Since we have already discussed this line of argument and rejected it we concentrate on the views of the latter three who discuss Revelation in detail.

Johnson for example begins with the observation that is typical of the rest of the school. According to him the history of the interpretation of the book of Revelation is largely a story of tragic misinterpretation resulting from a fundamental misapprehension of the work's literary form and purpose[460]. This misinterpretation according to Johnson appears to be invited by the text itself, for it claims to offer a "revelation from Jesus Christ" which makes known to the readers "what is going to happen shortly" (1.1)[461]. This is what makes people interpret the book as a prophecy, a divinely certified blueprint for the future. Johnson thinks that this misinterpretation has early roots that date back to the second century AD with the Church Father Papias who found in passages like Revelation 20:4-6 a literal promise of an earthly thousand-year reign of the saints before the end[462].

We criticize Johnson's major observation later together with the rest of the scholars who belong to this school of thought. What is of interest to us for now is Johnson's further observation. Already in Papias, Irenaeus, the mon-

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[459] For a detailed argument see E.S. Fiorenza, *The Book of Revelation Justice and Judgment*. Philadelphia. 1985.

[460] Johnson maintains this position even in the 1999 revised edition of his book.

[461] *Ibid.*

[462] *Ibid.*

tanists, Joachim of Fiore, and the radical reformers, Johnson found the first "millenarians" who found in Revelation a guide to the restored heaven and earth (21:1-2)[463]. Therefore, we are not completely lost when we closely kink the apocalypse with millenarianism. We are standing in a long-standing tradition. However, what brings further zeal and zing to us is the link that Johnson puts in place between the apocalypse and deprivation. Like us, Johnson argues that Revelation spoke, is speaking and shall continue to speak to those experiencing relative deprivation. He expresses the point we are trying to make in this dissertation so neatly that it is inevitable to cite him verbatim:

> The oppressed and unsettled in every age could also find in these passages – with their whispered injunctions to read between the lines (13:18; 17:9) – the identity of *their* beast (13:18) at whom their otherwise random hostility might legitimately be directed. Rulers and usurpers form Nero to Hitler have unwittingly borne the sobriquet "666"[464]

We discuss this reaction and vilification of perceived oppressors by the oppressed further and in detail later especially as we look at the question of the beast, but what brings more interest to us is Johnson's further observation, which again we cite verbatim:

> For the dispossessed and resentful, Revelation (in passages such as 21:1-8) offered, with the idealized picture of the primitive church in Acts 4:32-37, the basis for utopian, egalitarian projects that sought by human effort to bring about the vision of a heavenly Jerusalem. No matter that

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463   *Ibid.*
464   *Ibid.*

such movements invariably led to the destruction of their sponsors. The ideal is born again in every age, including our own, when many Christians find in Revelation the most helpful handbook for the determination of the inevitable Armageddon (16:16). In short, the Book of Revelation is one of those rare compositions that speak to something deep and disturbed in the human spirit with potency never diminished by fact or disconfirmation[465]

In both these citations Johnson links the interpretation of Revelation to the relative deprivation that the interpreters suffered. It is interesting that Johnson, like us, sees the apocalyptic ideology giving hope to, and ensuring the survival of, the millenarian. Thus, he vindicates what we are trying to do and makes us feel much more confident than ever to apply our paradigm and conceptual metaphor of millenarianism.

Freed, like Johnson, begins with the critical observation that Revelation has been the most misunderstood book in the New Testament and the reason why this has happened is because people think of the book's cryptic language as prophetic[466]. It is not immediately clear what Freed's exact problem with this is but it seems he has a problem with what people proceed to do with the assumption that Revelation is prophetic. According to him when people conclude that Revelation is prophetic they then proceed in either of the following two directions. Either they try to unravel the book's secrets and apply them to

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[465] *Ibid.*

[466] E.D. Freed, *The New Testament A Critical Introduction.* Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing. 1986. p. 355.

their own time or they ignore the work as unworthy of consideration[467].

This dissertation is about the former direction and hence we offer a much more detailed critique of Freed's observations about this first direction at the appropriate time. What is immediately interesting is Freed's critique of the latter direction. Freed thinks that while it is impossible to understand most of the things in Revelation since we are far removed from the circumstances under which the book was written, at least we can learn why we do not understand those things[468]. We argue that there has to be a better motive for studying the book. We cannot spend all this time and spill these huge quantities of ink only for purposes of learning why we cannot understand the book. Therefore unlike Freed, we focus on the content of the book and using appropriate tools, seek to understand it.

Regarding the first direction, which really is our main interest, we agree with Freed that ideally in Revelation we are dealing with an apocalypse[469], but we do not think that this excludes the view that the apocalyptic thought of Revelation continues from Old Testament prophecy. It is curious to note that the use of the Old Testament is a chief feature of the book of Revelation. Indeed, there is need to exercise caution with this observation. Revelation uses the Old Testament, as extensively as in Hebrews but unlike Hebrews that has exact Old Testament citations and clear allusions to the Old Testament, there is not a

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[467] *Ibid.*
[468] *Ibid.*, p. 356.
[469] *Ibid.*

single literal Old Testament quotation in Revelation[470]. Be that as it may, it is curious to learn that, as Freed puts it, there is an average of one echo or allusion to the Old Testament for every one verse with more than four hundred allusions in chapters 4-22[471]. Thus, there are reasonable grounds for the link between prophecy and apocalypticism that we have established earlier.

Many who do not agree with this necessary link do not think that Revelation is prophecy in the first place. We argue that looking at Revelation from any other perspective that does not recognize its prophetic nature does injustice to the text, for in the first place the author himself recognizes his words as such and calls himself a prophet. The opening words are typical of superscriptions attached to the great prophetic books of the Old Testament implying that even the final redactor(s) of the book of Revelation did take the book as prophecy.

Later we discuss the use of numbers and symbols in Revelation that we can trace back to prophetic books like Zechariah and this vindicates our link between prophecy and apocalypticism. Besides, Revelation uses the device of predictions but, as Freed notes, the predictions are misleading because they maybe allusions to events of the past or present that the author(s) make(s) to appear as though they are events yet to happen[472]. We argue that this is precisely what makes Revelation prophetic going by our definition of prophecy that we discussed in detail earlier, but

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[470] *Ibid.*
[471] *Ibid.*
[472] *Ibid.*

what is more interesting to us, this is what makes the book apocalyptic going by our definition of apocalypticism.

Thus, many people who focused on the content of Revelation were not totally lost when they approached the book from the paradigm of prophecy. We begin from here but go a step further to propose an expanded, and therefore slightly different, hermeneutical key, which is the conceptual metaphor of millenarianism. De Silva approaches the book of Revelation from almost the same perspective but without being as explicit as we are in this study.

Debating the question of genre, De Silva argues that Revelation can be viewed as a letter, early Christian prophecy and as apocalypse. We got into details of the literary genre when we dealt with the question of definitions earlier, for now we are interested in De Silva's designation of revelation as prophecy. De Silva argues that Revelation can be viewed as early Christian prophecy since John himself identifies his work as prophecy (Rev. 1:3; 22:7; 10, 18, 19)[473]. However, he immediately warns against the general tendency to view prophecy as synonymous with prediction and in the process he offers a definition of prophecy that we agree with. For him prophecy indeed includes the element of prediction but one characteristic of Jewish and early Christian prophecy was that it was primarily a declaration of God's doing in the

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[473] D. A. De Silva *An Introduction To The New Testament Contexts, Methods And Ministry Formation* Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2004. p. 887.

present and where there is a future prediction, the prophet limits the prediction to the imminently forthcoming future, not the distant future[474]. De Silva argues, and we agree, that it is this primary tenet of Jewish and early Christian prophecy that those who approach Revelation as prophecy usually loose sight of and the reason for this loss of sight is their conviction that if the predictions of Revelation were not fulfilled literally during the first or second century, they must be fulfilled at some later point[475]. It is in this regard that de Silva has problems with viewing Revelation as prophecy.

However, de Silva thinks that it is still possible to consider Revelation as prophecy without falling into the above problem. According to him, the conviction that every biblical forecast of some future event must be fulfilled at some point largely ignores the purpose of prophecy, which is not necessarily to give a hard and fast statement about an unchangeable future but to stimulate faithful response in the present[476]. Thus, as prophecy Revelation aims to bring the word from God into a specific situation, for specific people so that they are alerted to the course of action they must take to remain in or return to favour with God, and to avoid judgement[477].

Our resolve thus far to consider Revelation as prophecy brings into perspective the whole debate on the authorship of Revelation but what is more important is that it

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[474] *Ibid.*

[475] *Ibid.*

[476] *Ibid.*

[477] *Ibid.*, p. 889.

leads the discussion of the authorship to a logical conclusion that is consistent with our paradigm and conceptual metaphor of millenarianism. As prophecy then, the book of Revelation, like the prophetic books of the Old Testament we considered earlier, can be taken as a product of a prophet with his prophetic guild surrounding him. That prophet was John and the prophetic guild around him was the Johannine community. Therefore, as we argued earlier, like a typical millenarian sect, the ideas of this community emerged as a radical response to critical conditions of *galut*, relative deprivation that the prophet John articulated for the community and the articulation, which the community accepted, reshaped and adopted as their basic ideology and *modus operand*.

Our interests lie in what these critical conditions were and how ideologically the Johannine community responded. We investigate the possible creative milieu of Revelation in order to vindicate our thesis and to lay bare our interests. However, our argument here cannot be understood nor can it be accepted much more readily without a brief discussion of the possible date of writing of Revelation and hence its creative milieu. We are brief with this discussion because the reason for the discussion on the date of writing is that we intend to establish the necessary link between the discussion on the authorship and the discussion on the creative milieu of the book that comes later. Therefore, we quickly state our position on the date and argue for our option.

Most recent scholarship on the date of Revelation is divided into two basic camps, one that argues for an early date for the book during the period around the reign of

Nero and another school that argues for a late first century AD date that extends to the reign of Domitian. We consider first arguments for an earlier date.

Scholars who argue for a date of writing during, or immediately after, the reign of Nero rely mainly on the basic points below that derive largely from internal evidence. According to this school of thought reference to the temple in Revelation 11:1-2 and the prediction of the extent of the Gentiles' trampling on the outer courts of the temple shows that Revelation was written before AD 70 because when the temple was destroyed in AD 70 Titus's armies invaded even the Holy of Holies and burned the whole edifice[478].

Further the school uses the enumeration of seven kings or emperors' in Revelation 17:9-10. If we start with Julius Caesar, Nero becomes the fifth, Galba the sixth and Otho the seventh and if we begin with Augustus Caesar, he becomes the sixth, Galba the seventh and Otho the eighth[479]. Either way emperor to rule the empire, such an enumeration makes sense if we assume that Revelation was written shortly after Nero's death but before the Roman civil wars of AD 68-69 were settled. According to the statement in 17:10 there are seven kings, five of whom have already fallen, "one is, the other has not yet come, and when he comes he must remain only a little while". If we assume that Nero was the fifth king then the writer was aware of his death and that his successor Galba (AD 68) who was in power then would not be in power very

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478   *Ibid.,* p. 896.
479   *Ibid.*

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long[480]. If Nero were the sixth, then still the author knew that his reign was now short-lived and so would be the reigns of his successors. So, on this evidence the author probably wrote immediately before or soon after Nero's suicide in AD 68[481].

Other pieces of internal evidence have been cited to further support this Neronian date. The references to the beast's mortal wound being healed (Rev. 13:3) and that the beast "that was and is not" still has authority (Rev. 17:8-12) are examples of references that this school takes as allusions to beliefs associated with Nero that the author of Revelation was aware of. For instance, after his death a two-fold myth that Nero would return developed[482]. Initially, the myth had it that Nero had not actually died but had gone to the East to lead the Parthians, Rome's enemy, against Rome[483]. Later however, it was held that Nero had died but would be revived (Nero *redivivus*) and return[484]. So when the author refers to the beast's mortal wound being healed he was perhaps alluding to this myth of the revival of Nero. Besides, it is implicit in the author's advice to the readers or to be specific, the seven churches, that the churches were threatened by oppression from without (Rev. 1:9; 2:10) and they were experiencing or were about to experience suffering (6:9; 12:7-8; 17:6). The advice to be faithful unto death (2:10) implies serious op-

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[480]   E.D. Freed *Op. Cit.* p. 359.

[481]   *Ibid.*

[482]   *Ibid.*

[483]   *Ibid.*

[484]   *Ibid.*

pression and intense suffering that most likely took place during the Neronian persecutions. Finally, this school of thought also interpreted Revelation 13:18 as a designation of Nero. This can be inferred from the fact that the Hebrew letters in the name Nero Caesar (*nrwn qsr*) add up to 666 if the final "n" is dropped from *nrwn*[485].

However, these arguments for an earlier date of writing are not without their problems. First it is dubious whether the text, in Revelation11:1-2 indeed implies that the temple then was still standing. That language there is too apocalyptic to refer only to the events culminating in the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in AD 70. Otherwise, the author in this text must have alluded to many other details concerning the Jewish war leading to the destruction of the temple. What is more problematic than anything else is that a date before AD 70 would imply that the book of Revelation was written before almost all the Gospels. It is hard to explain why the Gospels do not show even the slightest hint that they were aware of the book.

Equally unconvincing is the argument based on inferences from Revelation 13:3 and 17:8-12 respectively. If the inference is correct that these two verses do show that the author was aware of the two-phase myth about Nero, then a more valid argument for a later date can be constructed from the evidence. As Freed points out, the Nero myth did not develop until the end of the first century AD and

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485   *Ibid.*

so according to this evidence Revelation could not have been written before then[486].

That the number 666 in Revelation 13:18 refers to the figure Nero is flawed in two or three respects. To begin with we are not sure whether the Rabbinic literary device of *gematria* works the way that this school of thought suggests and that is, getting a Hebrew transliteration of a Latin name and then assigning numerical value onto the letters in the Hebrew transliteration. For the Latin spelling of Nero gives us the number 616, which is quite a significant textual variant from 666[487]. Besides, the Hebrew transliteration only gives us a numerical value of 666 if we drop the final 'n' from *nrwn* and we query not only the grammatical accuracy of this but also its grammatical justification. After all, even if it were the case that the number 666 refers to the figure Nero, this in itself does not prove that the book was therefore written either during or immediately after Nero's reign. Therefore, we agree with Freed that the evidence that Revelation was written in or near the time of Nero is tenuous and certainly inconclusive[488]. For this reason we opt for another date, arguments for which we consider immediately below.

The traditional view, which is accepted by the majority of the Church Fathers, is that the book of Revelation was written from AD 79-96 and other scholars narrow further the range to AD 95-96. The tradition appears to derive from Irenaeus who dated the book towards the end of

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486   *Ibid.*
487   *Ibid.*
488   *Ibid.*

Domitian's reign (Adv. Haer. 5. 30. 3) and Eusebius (Hist. Eccl. 3. 18. 3; 5. 30. 3) accepted this as authoritative[489]. However, this evidence from the Church Fathers is neither sufficient nor conclusive on its own.

The school of thought that we subscribe to uses the same internal evidence as the former school and more texts than these to demonstrate their point. We get into some of the texts that are interpreted. Scholars who subscribe to a late date of writing for the book of Revelation argue that the expression the "healing of a death blow" (the beast's mortal wound) dealt to the beast in Revelation 13:3 points to the rise to power of Vespasian after the violent reigns of Galba, Otho and Vitellius that were characterized by civil war that shook Rome at its very foundations[490]. Healing only came with the establishment of the new dynasty of Vespasian, an establishment that is even depicted on the coins of the time. On one of the sides of the coins there is the image of Vespasian advancing to take the hand of Rome and raising her hand to a standing position again and the words "Rome Resurgent" are inscribed into the coin[491]. The image and inscription of the words are interpreted to commemorate the restoration of peace and health in the empire after the civil wars of 68/69 AD and the ideology of the Flavian dynasty as the restorers of Rome[492].

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[489]   D.A. de Silva, *Op. Cit.* p. 897.

[490]   *Ibid.*

[491]   *Ibid.*

[492]   *Ibid.*

Therefore, the enumeration or headcount in 17:9-10 should not include these "interregnum emperors", who were more part of the wound than part of the healing[493]. If these emperors were excluded then the count would certainly extend to Domitian. Thus too, if the "ten diadems" in Revelation 13:1 refer to ten emperors, then the book would have been written, in Freed's view, during the time of Titus (AD 79-81) the tenth emperor[494] and in our view, probably later during the time of Domitian. The situation reflected in the book of Revelation in general, and particularly in the letters to the seven churches is typical of the later first century AD. The Neronian persecution had sparked off the kind of persecution that resulted in a lot of martyrs in the first century and as de Silva points out, at the time of writing the martyrs were growing impatient as they were still to wait longer for the vindication amidst the antagonism between the Church and synagogue and the separation of the two[495].

However, what caused anxiety among the living were current threat of persecution and the ever-growing sense of forthcoming persecution based on the imperial cult of emperor worship[496]. Domitian is notorious for this. By then he is known to have decreed that all official proclamations should begin with "Our Lord and God orders..." and this referring to himself[497]. So obsessed was he with

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[493]   *Ibid.*
[494]   E.D. Freed, *Op. Cit.*
[495]   D.A. de Silva, *Op. Cit.*
[496]   *Ibid.*
[497]   *Ibid.*

power that he even commanded his own family to address him as "Our Lord and God", and he even had his niece Domitilla banished and her husband, Flavius Clemens, and others executed as "atheists" in 95 AD because they did not take part in the imperial cult of emperor worship[498]. Thus, words like "Man worshipped the dragon" (13:4; 4:8, 11-18) begin to make sense within this context of emperor worship. The words "the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne" (6:9) may refer to Christians who refused to take part in this emperor worship[499].

The naming of Rome as "Babylon"" best suits a post 70 AD date after Rome had repeated the atrocity of her predecessors in destroying the Jerusalem temple[500]. Besides, the author seems to allude to both the authentic and the disputed letters of Paul, including what Freed considers as the cover letter for the Pauline corpus, that is, Ephesians and this implies that the author probably knew Paul's letters as a collection[501]. Paul's letters are known to have been published, as a group towards the end of the first century AD and logically, Revelation was not written before then.

However, it is precisely this argument linking the date of writing with Domitian, the first emperor to encourage emperor worship in the East, that brings some zing and ease into our thesis because it helps us to tie together eve-

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[498] E.D. Freed, *Op. Cit.*
[499] *Ibid.,* p. 368.
[500] D.A. de Silva *Op. Cit.*
[501] E.D. Freed, *Op. Cit.*

rything neatly, that is, the issue of authorship we discussed earlier, the date of writing under discussion now, and the question of the creative milieu of the book of Revelation that we discuss immediately below. De Silva has an interesting view, which he takes from D.E. Anne that links the three items above in a very interesting way that helps to provide a big piece in our paradigm and overall thesis.

According to de Silva, John the prophet (who may have been either the apostle or elder or both) wrote the initial materials during the first Jewish revolt[502]. These materials include the few specific passages that reflect conditions in Judea or the empire at large prior to the conclusion of the Jewish revolt[503]. No wonder why it is possible to argue for a date of writing around this time. However, the community of disciples around this prophet then did weave these materials into the final form of the book of Revelation interpreting the earlier oracles of the prophet slightly differently now so as to address the new and changed conditions facing their Christian audience in Asia Minor. Therefore, the differences that Revelation has with the rest of the Johannine literature, let alone, the New Testament as a whole, may not necessarily be attributed to the passage of time, that is, chronological development, but rather, as one school of thought argues, to the transformations required by the apocalyptic[504]. The evidence of active and organized persecution unto death in the text pre-

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[502] D.A. de Silva, *Op. Cit.*

[503] *Ibid.*

[504] L.T. Johnson, *Op. Cit.*

sumably toward the end of the first century perhaps necessitated this transformation from the narrative and epistolary genres to the apocalyptic genre that we find in the form of the book of Revelation.

Indeed, the socio-political and economic conditions under which the book of Revelation came into being are not easy to outline in a simple and plain manner. Part of the reason is the lack of agreement among scholars regarding the date of writing we discussed above. We took the position above for a reason. While we discuss mostly the conditions in the Roman Empire during the time of Domitian, our position on the date of writing allows us to discuss also the conditions during the time of Nero and perhaps earlier. This also kind of vindicates our basic conviction that the conditions that necessitate the formation of a sect and the transformation from narrative genre to an apocalyptic one did not form in a single day.

Theories on the creative milieu of the Book of Revelation

The opinions of scholars regarding the creative milieu of the book of Revelation can be grouped into two broad categories namely, the traditional view and the recent revisionist theory deriving largely from classicists.

The traditional theory that comes largely from New Testament exegetes is that the book of Revelation comes from a crisis situation mainly during the period of Domitian. To put it in our own words, the apocalyptic or millenarian thought in the book of Revelation is a radical response to the relative deprivation that the community behind the book of Revelation suffered. Judging from this direction that our thesis is taking, we do not hesitate that

we are more sympathetic, and indeed go along, with this traditional view, than the recent view although we expand and reshape it in a manner that suits better our thesis.

The traditional view appears to derive from a two-fold general assumption that the book of Revelation was written during the time of Domitian and that Domitian himself was an evil incompetent ruler who instituted an empire-wide persecution of Christians[505]. This assumption can be traced back to church tradition, Irenaeus being perhaps the earliest witness to dating of the book of Revelation towards the end of Domitian's reign (Adv. Haer. 5. 30. 3)[506]. Some prominent Roman writers, among them Pliny the Younger (ca. 60- ca. 115), Tacitus (ca. 55 – ca. 120) and Seutonius (ca 75 – ca. 135), officially depict Domitian as an evil, incompetent ruler who arrogantly demanded that he be worshipped as "*dominus et deus noster*" (as "our Lord and God")[507]. Other sources have it that he decreed that all official proclamations begin with "Our Lord and God orders..." and that he commanded his family to address him as "our Lord and God" and had his niece Domitilla banished while her husband, Flavius Clemens and others were executed as "atheists" in AD 95 because they did not take part in this emperor worship[508]. Several commentators, even those that question the negative depiction of Domitian, do agree that during the reign

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[505] T.B. Slater, "On the social setting of the Revelation to John" in *New Testament Studies Vol. 44,* 1998 p. 233.

[506] *Ibid.*

[507] *Ibid.*

[508] Freed, *Op. Cit.* p. 359.

of Domitian the titles "Saviour" and "Benefactor" and Roman claims to divine honours were applied to the emperor more frequently[509]. Some evidence from the text may be cited. For example reference to "men [who] worshiped the dragon" (Rev. 13:4 see also 4:8, 11-18) may allude to the emperor worship and it may be assumed that the words, "souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne" (Rev. 6:9) may refer to Christians who refused to take part in the cult of emperor worship[510]. This may imply that there was some persecution of Christians during the reign of Domitian and therefore the depiction of Domitian as an evil ruler by the Roman writers is not entirely way-ward.

Recently revisionists in the mode of some New Testament exegetes following some classicists have begun questioning this traditional theory right from its underlying two-fold assumption. According to them there is no historical evidence to substantiate an empire-wide, official persecution of Christians nor is there any support for the conclusion that Domitian was a second Nero who was administratively incompetent, emotionally insecure and a relentless persecutor of Christians[511]. From this critique this recent school of thought then concludes that the absence of any mention of an empire-wide persecution of Christians in the letters to the seven churches (Rev. 2:1-3:22) shows that the book of Revelation was not written as a response to Christian suffering but as a response to

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509   T.B. Slater, *Op. Cit.*
510   E.D. Freed, *Op. Cit* p. 360.
511   T.B. Slater, *Op. Cit.* p. 232.

various forms of religious laxity within the congregations themselves[512].

As we discuss later this critique is not easily sustainable. Indeed there is no direct reference to some capricious persecution of Christians in the Revelation itself, but to say there is at least no official historical evidence to support the depiction we have about Domitian is not quite accurate, when official Roman historians and writers like Seutonius, Tacitus and Pliny the Younger do have data to this effect. What may be acceptable is to question the historical accuracy of what the above writers say and not to profess ignorance of the presence of evidence.

L. L. Thompson perhaps took cognisance of the possibility of the kind of fallacy we are pointing out above and opted for a more cautious approach that questions the historical accuracy of, and exposes alleged biases in, the data available from the above Roman sources. According to Thompson the negative depiction of Domitian as a persecutor of the Church and a second Nero must be questioned[513]. He offers two basic premises for this conclusion that are distinct but inseparable for him. First, the widely negative impression of Domitian comes from anti-Flavian writers who sought the favour of Trajan and his successors and whom Trajan also used to argue that his imperial family was superior to its predecessors, the Flavians and, second, all epigraphic, numismatic, prosopographic and

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512   *Ibid.*
513   *Ibid.,* p. 234.

biographic data contemporary with Domitian depict him more fairly[514].

Regarding the first premise, Thompson argues that the official depiction of Domitian as an evil incompetent ruler who arrogantly demanded that he be worshipped as *dominus et deus noster* comes from Pliny the Younger, Tacitus and Seutonius who according to Thompson, formed a circle of friends and historians that heavily influenced later Roman and Christian writers concerning Domitian (The latter include Dio Cassius, Juvenal, Philostratus and Eusebius)[515].

Thompson gets into specific details of the negative depiction of Domitian, which we do not get into. What we are more interested in is his explanation of why this so called circle of friends and historians depicted Domitian negatively. He offers two reasons why these historians depicted Domitian negatively. First, according to Thompson these writers were employed by Trajan to propagate his "new era" (beginning with Nerva) that he (Trajan) proclaimed in order to legitimise his dynasty and also to distinguish it from the Flavians[516]. It is difficult for us to see how this ploy would work but according to Thompson, and we quote him verbatim:

> The opposing of Trajan and Domitian in a binary set serves
> overtly in Trajan's ideology of a new age as well as covertly
> in his praise. Newness requires a beginning and therefore a

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[514]   *Ibid.*

[515]   *Ibid.*

[516]   *Ibid.,* p. 235.

break with the past; such a break is constructed rhetorically through binary contrast[517].

Thus, agreeing with classicists like Pleket and Viscusi, Thompson offers a double conclusion that Domitian was no more despotic an emperor than his predecessors. The Jews and the Christians in the empire were not singled out be Domitian for persecution but enjoyed the benefits of the *pax Romana* as did other groups in Roman society and therefore too, no actual crisis existed but only a tension between Christian expectations and reality, a tension within the "social location" of the minds of Christians[518].

Two aspects of Thompson's argument here interest us. First, Thompson's terminology of binary rhetorics seems to be a clever way of telling us in a hidden manner that the same writers whom he says were employed by the Trajan to promote his the emperor in fact opposed this same emperor. What does "opposing of Trajan and Domitian in a binary set" actually mean? If people employed to promote an emperor oppose him the more logical thing to do is to fire them. We are particularly interested here in how opposing Trajan covertly worked in his praise. We think in this instance Thompson engaged in a complex prose style that J. M. Williams calls academes[519] in order to avoid, or conceal rather, the damaging admission that Pliny, Tacitus and Seutonius indeed opposed their alleged employer, Trajan. Interestingly, Thompson acknowledges

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[517] *Ibid.*

[518] *Ibid.*

[519] Joseph M. Williams, *Style Ten Lessons in Clarity and Grace 2nd Ed.* Illinois: Scott, Foresmann and Co. 1985. p. 2.

that the same writers had good careers under Domitian implying that if they criticized Domitian their criticism was probably authentic. Second, Thompson's conclusion betrays a very interesting point that in fact, Christians in the empire suffered from relative deprivation. What he calls, "a tension between Christian expectations and reality" is exactly what we defined in an earlier chapter as relative deprivation and as we argued in that chapter relative deprivation does not arise from a vacuum. It is a phenomenon that arises in a crisis. So, when Thompson thinks that there was no actual crisis in the empire we take the exact opposite view. There was indeed a crisis, actual crisis. The discussion below of the second reason why the Roman writers under discussion depicted Domitian negatively vindicates our position here.

The second reason that Thompson offers for the negative depiction of Domitian is that Pliny the Younger and Tacitus in particular, had political axes to grind against Domitian. It is interesting that Thompson does not include Seutonius here. According to him, the two had relatives and, or, friends who were either exiled or executed by Domitian[520]. Also both felt that Domitian hampered their opportunities for advancement and inhibited free speech[521].

Again what Thompson advances as evidence to discredit the negative depiction of Domitian by Pliny and Tacitus actually works the other way. Thompson does not deny that Pliny and Tacitus had relatives and, or, friends

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[520] T.B. Slater, *Op. Cit.*
[521] *Ibid.*

who were either exiled or executed by Domitian. He actually states it as a fact. If it were a fact that Domitian either exiled or executed some people, whether or not they were Pliny and Tacitus' relatives, implies that there is a core of truth in what Pliny and his circle of friends were claiming about Domitian that was evil. At least Thompson and his circle of classicists should have offered some justification why Domitian either exiled or executed some people so that he would be exonerated from the events or issues that brought about his negative depiction.

This same critique makes us agree with Pliny and Tacitus that Domitian hampered free speech (Pliny, *Epistles* 3. 11. 3-4; 24. 4-5; 7. 27. 14; *Panegyric* 95. 3-4; Tacitus, *Agricola* 2-3, 44-5)[522]. Therefore, what Thompson and company would want to deny that Christians suffered under Domitian is perhaps the true scenario. Perhaps something in Thompson's mind and probably part of him would want to agree with our conclusion here and this must have influenced him to craft his own conclusion in such a way that he implicitly admits to some suffering that the Christians experienced, only that for him this suffering was a psychological experience, something located within the "social location" of the minds of the Christians. Even this is an admission that there was some suffering that the Christians suffered. What was the source of the psychological experience? Can a psychological experience occur without a physical phenomenon triggering it? We are all the more convinced that Christians under Domitian suffered from deprivation a phenomenon that did

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[522]   *Ibid.*

arise in a crisis. Therefore if, as we agree here, the book of Revelation was written during Domitian's reign, then it follows that it was a product of a community behind that was responding to a crisis. The genre of apocalypse and the apocalyptic ideology in the book are necessary responses to deprivation.

Thompson's second premise rests heavily on the works of the classicists, Viscusi, Quintilian, Martial Statius and Silius Italicus who wrote during Domitian's reign. T.B. Slater does a wonderful job in his analysis of these works and the details do not change our position nor do they improve it any more sharply. What is of next interest to us is the next argument from the revisionists dealing with internal evidence particularly the letters to the seven churches in the initial chapters of Revelation. This argument interests us in so far as it tries to deny the conclusion we reached above that under Domitian Christians suffered from relative deprivation and the book therefore is a response to this crisis. Our interest grows from the fact that this counter argument claims to be premised on internal evidence from the book of Revelation itself, in particular, the letters to the seven churches in Revelation chapters 2 and 3.

Scholars who deny that Christians under Domitian suffered from deprivation and that the book of Revelation is thus responding to this crisis argue that the letters to the seven churches do not mention persecution or oppression as chief problems for these churches in Asia[523]. Rather, complacency, compromise and, or, accommodation are

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[523]   *Ibid.,* p. 238.

their chief problems[524]. This school of thought argues that in any case the letters do not provide us with data sufficient enough to ascertain any substantial information about the broader society[525]. An interesting argument that the school presents is the argument concerning the apocalyptic genre of these letters.

This argument appears to emanate from an analysis of the presumed purpose of the letters. C.H.H. Scobie correctly notes that the letters have been subject of extensive study by contemporary scholars partly because of the conviction that they provide a convenient entry point, and even a key, to understanding some of the complexities and mysteries of the book of Revelation as a whole[526]. In other words, the letters are necessary introductions to the apocalyptic visions of the book of Revelation and not merely prose versions of these visions. Each of the letters follows a stereotyped framework in which a considerable variety of imagery and symbolism is employed that refers back to the inaugural vision of chapter one and forward to later passages in Revelation. It is this conviction that the school in question, for some reason, tries to edit, if not, deny. For example, according to this school, since the letters are in prose they represent a more straightforward version of the apocalyptic visions[527].

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[524] *Ibid.*

[525] *Ibid.,* p. 239.

[526] Charles H. H. Scobie, "Local references in the letters of the seven churches" in *New Testament Studies Vol. 39,* 1993 p. 606.

[527] T.B. Slater, *Op. Cit.,* p. 238.

It seems the logic of the suggestion from this school is that since the letters are in prose form the author must have been dealing with problems that were not of a political nature, problems that did not pose a threat both to him and the churches he addressed. Therefore, there was no need for his communication to be either highly symbolic or coded. As we argue later, this is where this school seems to miss the point. Further, and what comes out more explicitly from the argument of this school, the letters were written in order to describe the internal religious life of each church so that each church might become spiritually strong enough to endure and withstand the apocalyptic trials and subsequently "enter the new Jerusalem"[528]. In other words, the purpose of the letters is to focus on the specific issues within each church in order to ensure each church's spiritual well being[529]. The school further argues that John's assumption here was that if the churches corrected their internal problems then they would enter the New Jerusalem[530].

While we discuss in detail our objections to this view later, it is worth noting that if indeed in terms of literary genre these seven pieces of work are genuine letters, then as letters they inevitably were issue-specific. Slater is right when he argues that given the proper understanding of their purpose, to expect the letters to provide data regarding the relationship of the Christian community to its wider social milieu would be to ask questions that the let-

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[528] *Ibid.,* p. 239.
[529] *Ibid.*
[530] *Ibid.*

ters were not primarily meant to answer. The letters were meant to discuss specific issues of accommodation, or compromise, or complacency but this is not to say these are the key issues to the exclusion of Christian suffering.

Besides we are not very sure whether it is possible to talk about a "straight forward" version of an apocalyptic vision. Once a vision is deemed apocalyptic it necessarily follows that it is symbolic and coded and as such we cannot refer to it as straight forward. We do not want to get bogged down with terms and therefore, we go into the premises and conclusions that this school of thought perhaps considers weightier. A discussion of these allows us to develop concretely Slater's observations and our own point of departure from him. Slater is basically in dialogue with a number of scholars who belong to the school under discussion chief among whom is C.H.H. Scobie. For our argument to come out much more clearly we revisit in some detail Scobie's argument and then bring in any other relevant detail from the rest of the school.

As we stated earlier, Scobie, like the rest of his school, grapples with the basic conviction about the presumed purpose of the letters we outlined above. However, Scobie appears to have problems with other views that have accompanied this conviction. One such view comes from Sir William Ramsay who, although he was not the pioneer, developed the theory of local references in the letters to the seven churches, which Scobie discusses in detail. Carefully, Scobie distinguishes two theories coming from Ramsay. The first one concerns the reason why John wrote to only these seven churches and not to other Christian communities elsewhere in Asia and the second is the

theory of local references in the letters to the seven churches. For Scobie the two are not necessarily tied together. For us it is profitable to discuss both even though we offer a brief discussion of the first theory.

Ramsay's theory in this regard appears to be the source of a broad consensus today that the seven letters were not written separately, sent to each church and then later collected, but rather they were published as a block along with the rest of the book[531], which implies that each church would receive not only the letter addressed to it, but also letters addressed to the other six churches. According to Ramsay, this was in accordance with the communication system that the Christian community had set up following the system maintained by the great trading companies of the time[532]. Each of the seven cities where the churches were located respectively was the centre of an already existing postal district and the seven churches thus lay on a roughly circular route that followed the natural lines of communication[533]. This was the basic communication circuit. Ramsay envisages secondary circuits feeding from this basic circuit and this implies that while communication in these letters was, as it were, directed to the seven churches, John was aware that his message would eventually reach also the wider society. It is primarily for this reason that Scobie has problems with this theory; it undermines Ramsay second theory of local references in the letters, which Scobie subscribes to. This

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[531]   C.H.H. Scobie, *Op. Cit.*
[532]   *Ibid.,* p. 607.
[533]   *Ibid.*

is why Scobie finds it necessary to point out that Ramsay's recognition of such local references is not necessarily tied to his theory on why John wrote to these particular seven churches[534].

Ramsay's view concerning the communication system then does not cause any problem for us. If anything it vindicates our position that these letters were probably directed also to the wider society in Asia in the first century, and this helps us to mark our point of departure with confidence. However, we seek also to concretise our position from Ramsay's second theory, which seems to be the gist of Scobie's own view.

According to Ramsay, while John composed all the seven letters on the same general lines, he imparted on them many touches, especially suitable to the individual churches, and showing his intimate knowledge of them all[535]. These touches are what are called the local references and these are then used to show that the letters therefore were not addressed to the wider society in Asia and were thus not meant to introduce the later apocalyptic sections of Revelation that presumably deal with the socio-political conditions of the wider society.

It is this theory that Scobie develops and he builds his view from earlier commentators and travellers like M.J.S. Rudwick, E.M.B. Green, P. Wood and C.J. Hemer who visited the sites in question. These commentators identified local references in the letters that can be classified as comprising mainly allusions to three things namely,

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534   *Ibid.*
535   *Ibid.*

events in the past history of the cities, topographical features of the sites and aspects of contemporary life in the cities[536].

At least fifty suggested local references can be compiled and Hemer positively evaluated about thirty-five of them. Only three examples suffice to serve our purposes. We pick an example from each of the three categories outlined above. Ramsay suggested, and many have long since followed him in this, that the phrase in Revelation 2:8, "who died and came to life..." (cf. the further reference to death and life in 2:10 and death in 2:11), is a typical historical reference, which should be viewed and understood in the light of the city of Smyrna that itself died and came back to life[537]. The city was destroyed by the Lydians in about 600BC, and was refounded on a new site two miles south of the old site around 290BC, under Antigonius and then Lysimachus, representing a totally new beginning[538].

It is not immediately clear how a text that is referring to the risen Jesus Christ can be construed to refer to the city of Smyrna. Maybe we may give this school the benefit of the doubt when we consider the other works of art like the work of the orator Aelius Aristides who when referring to the rebirth of the city, compared Smyrna to the phoenix, a symbol used by the early Christian writers as early as I Clement as a type of the resurrection of Christ[539]. However, even with this comparison we still have problems. It

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[536]   *Ibid.,* p. 608.
[537]   *Ibid.*
[538]   *Ibid.,* p. 609.
[539]   *Ibid.*

is Aristides who compared Smyrna to the phoenix and not the early Christians. We doubt whether the early Christians would interpret Revelation 2:8 to mean a phoenix denoting the city of Smyrna. In any case the theory of local references in this case does not dispute the fact that the city suffered deprivation that resulted in its destruction, if not, loss of its status as a city. The orator Aelius Aristides actually utilized the apocalyptic image of the phoenix as a type of Christ's resurrection to boost the city's estimation of honour. In this example we see one major function of the apocalyptic message of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and that is, to give hope and the restoration of the recipients estimation of honour so that they live a new rejuvenated life that is full of purpose and hope.

Revelation 2:10 also concerns the city of Smyrna but we take it as an example of a topographical reference. In Revelation 2:10 the church at Smyrna is given a promise of "the crown of life" and according to this school, this reference should be interpreted from the perspective of the symbol of "crown" that ancient writers frequently applied to the city and which appeared on coins and inscriptions; and a symbol which was particularly applied also to the appearance of Mount Pagus in the midst of the city "rising symmetrically to its crown of battlement"[540]. This school argues that John here was promising the Christians at Smyrna, not the kind of crown in which the city

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[540] *Ibid.*

took pride, but the "crown of life" which only God can confer[541].

Once again it is not immediately clear how this can easily be discernable as a local reference denoting the city of Smyrna. Even if we do give this school the benefit of the doubt and accept the text as a local reference, we still do not see how the reference militates against the view that the Christians in the city together with the rest of the people there suffered deprivation. In fact, the reference to "life and death" in the first reference and the promise of "the crown of life" clearly point to the direction that we are suggesting. At a relevant point later we offer explanations to these symbols that in our view are much more easily acceptable understandings of the symbols but that still take cognisance of the social milieu of the sites in question.

The third reference is perhaps the most interesting of the three examples we have isolated. This is the reference to the characterization of Christ as "him who has the sharp two-edged sword" in Revelation 2:12 (cf. v. 16.)[542]. This is taken as a local reference that was meant to deliberately contrast the power wielded by the Roman proconsul in the city of Pergamum then[543]. Ramsay's argument here is particularly important. Looked at from within the context of life in the provincial capital where the proconsul was granted the power to execute at will i.e., the right of the sword (*uis gladii*), the sovereign Christ with

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[541]   *Ibid.*
[542]   *Ibid.,* p. 610.
[543]   *Ibid.*

the two-edged sword would remind the threatened congregation that ultimate power over life and death belongs to God[544].

This latter reference, like the rest, certainly makes us all the more suspicious regarding the question of the suffering of the Christians in this city. If the reference of the Christ yielding a two-edged sword was directed towards a threatened Christian community in Pergamum, we seriously suspect that somehow this community was suffering deprivation. However, what is more important for us, the imagery of Christ yielding a two-edged sword is used to restore hope to a community that was otherwise hopeless. Precisely this is our point concerning the role, significance and the status of apocalyptic discourse, to restore hope and therefore, the estimation of honour of the millenarian. So, this latter local reference does two things to our thesis, first, it vindicates our point that these local references do not prove that Christians in the sites cited did not experience suffering nor do they necessarily imply that the author was not addressing the wider socio-political milieu in Asia. To the contrary, the purpose of the apocalyptic symbols and, or, imageries in the local references concerned shows that the audience addressed was most likely suffering deprivation. Second, it provides hints to the use of the apocalyptic imagery or symbols and discourse in the survival of the millenarian sect that we discuss later.

Scobie goes further to analyse Hermer's review of local references that Ramsay and others identified and sought

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[544] *Ibid.*

to explain. He gets into fine details of some explanations of the local references that Hermer identified as well as the criticism received. According to him a serious challenge to Hermer came from P. Prigent[545], a scholar we are also interested in because of what he says regarding the recipients of the seven letters.

Prigent argues that there are no local references at all in the letters[546]. John's major preoccupation was with a heresy which flourished in all the seven churches and that is a kind of Gnosticism whose main feature was dualism that attached no importance to what one does in the world of matter, and hence was willing to compromise with idolatry and saw no value refusing to change the beliefs especially when such failure to change led to martyrdom[547]. Prigent's reference to martyrdom in his conclusion is a subtle admission that there were instances where Christians were persecuted for their beliefs. Indeed he recognizes some references to localized persecution and problems posed by pagan religions in general and the imperial cult in particular, but contrary to our view Prigent does think that these do not lie at the centre of John's letters[548]. This is where we differ with Prigent but we deal with this part of his argument later.

Scobie thinks that Prigent's view seems to be more vulnerable that Hemer's[549] and we are not surprised. Pri-

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545   *Ibid.,* p. 615.
546   *Ibid.,* p. 617.
547   *Ibid.,* p. 615.
548   *Ibid.*
549   *Ibid.,* p. 616.

gent's theory is less favourable to Scobie because it is an open attack to the theory of local references, which he subscribes to. We agree with neither Hemer, Prigent nor Scobie himself but part of what they say is of particular interest to us. While broadly speaking Scobie agrees with Hemer, he notes a two-fold critique that Hemer's book has attracted. Critics of Hemer's work have noted that he fails to take cognisance of developments in two related areas namely, the study of apocalyptic and the sociological interpretation of Revelation[550].

Apparently, our own study here seeks to penetrate the book of Revelation through the model of millenarianism, which as we argued earlier is one and the same thing as apocalypticism. Also, our hermeneutical exposition of the book and its relevance to contemporary society utilizes models borrowed from Social Scientific Criticism, that is, we aim at a sociological interpretation of the book of Revelation. Therefore, we take this two-fold critique of Hemer's work seriously and seek to fine-tune our own views and highlight our own points of departure from it.

The first critique is that recent work has made important contributions to the understanding of the apocalyptic genre and Hemer underestimates the genre of apocalyptic[551]. Scobie defends Hemer in this regard. According to him, it is very much an open question today how far the book of Revelation, and in particular the letters to the seven churches, can most accurately be classified as

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[550] *Ibid.,* cf. the Reviews by A.Y. Collins in *CBQ 49* (1987) 504-5; J.M. Court in *JJS 38 (1987)* 513-14 and J.E. Stanley *Int. 42* (1988) 210-12.
[551] *Ibid.*

apocalyptic[552]. Scobie then cites a number of recent works that he views as impressive, which emphasise the prophetic aspects of Revelation. These works include works by D. Hill, R.L. Muse, D.E. Aune, E.S. Fiorenza, and surprisingly Scobie includes, A.Y. Collins' work, *Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalyp*se (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984), which in our view emphasises clearly the apocalyptic genre and what is more important for us, vindicates our thesis of the book of Revelation as a response to a crisis. The main argument in these works, which Scobie reiterates is that while the letters do employ some apocalyptic terminology such as "the second death" in Revelation 2:11 and "the New Jerusalem" in Revelation 3:12 and that this terminology reappears later, in content, and to some extent in form, they are perhaps more accurately to be classified as prophetic oracles than apocalyptic, and their true antecedents are to be found in the prophetic books of the Old Testament, rather than in Intertestament apocalypses[553].

When we opened this chapter we identified four disputes that we deal with in this chapter and the first dispute arising from Hanson helps us to sharpen our thoughts regarding the genre of apocalyptic. We have already taken a position regarding this dispute when we dealt with the question of definitions and therefore, we begin to reap fruits from that earlier discussion as we put in place pieces we could not fit earlier so as to complete the jigsaw and overall picture. We highlight now how the

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552   *Ibid.*
553   *Ibid.*

apocalyptic genre is unfolding as a result of the metamorphosis of earlier traditions articulated by the prophet John and the community around him, a millenarian sect, facing new challenges of deprivation.

Precisely it is here where we differ with Scobie and the rest of his school of thought and it is here where we think they miss the point. By failing to recognize this link between Old Testament prophecy and apocalyptic and therefore ignoring and, or, putting less value on the apocalyptic terminology in the letters, Scobie and his school not only lose vital meaning intended in the letters but also they fail to make the crucial connection between these letters and the rest of the book of Revelation, in particular, that the letters serve as necessary introductions to later apocalyptic sections of the book of Revelation. Therefore too, the scholars also miss the point that like the rest of the book, these letters address issues concerning the wider society in Asia then.

Scobie's comments on the second critique concerning Hemer's view are equally unconvincing. He notes correctly that at the time of writing Hemer was indeed aware of the genesis of a new sociological approach to the Book of Revelation in the late 70s and early 80s but somehow following E.A. Judge, Hemer had problems with what he viewed as transposing anthropological theories half-way round the world, and across two millennia, without adequately testing for applicability in the new setting[554]. We are not very sure whether we follow either Hemer or Scobie himself but what we seem to read from Scobie's dis-

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[554]   *Ibid.*

cussion is that Hemer himself was aware of the importance of the newly emerging sociological approach to the book of Revelation and this is why he called for a "social history" that was for him "a rigorous discipline directed to the specifics of place and time"[555]. If Scobie takes this caution regarding the use of anthropological theories to analyse the book of Revelation as a rejection of the sociological approach to the book then that is unfortunate because Hemer seemed to have realized that the use of the sociological approach was indispensable and inevitable but only that as a new approach emerging Hemer was perhaps not very certain about many things and rightfully called for a cautious use of the approach.

In our view what Scobie thinks are the weaknesses of the approach are in fact its strengths. He correctly notes that most recent sociological treatments of Revelation attempt to analyse the "symbolic universe" of the book in relation to the social, economic, historical and political situation of the author and his audience albeit the sociologists differ in their perceptions of that situation[556]. We see Hemer and others belonging to his school trying to do exactly this but where we differ with them is that they localize their sociological perceptions to particular texts relating to the particular social context of each of the letters. The audience may have been scattered in seven different places but the social location and the creative milieu of the author was one that affected and determined his symbolic universe. Therefore, unlike Scobie we have no problem

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[555] *Ibid.*
[556] *Ibid.,* p. 613.

with the assumption of most sociologists that we must concentrate on the book of Revelation as a whole that was addressed to one community living in a particular social setting. This assumption is not rendered fallacious by the fact that the seven letters are addressed to seven different communities living in seven differing sets of circumstances. We note as others have done, that the letters do follow a stereotyped pattern and this is not accidental. Scobie makes an observation that is of interest to us in this regard. According to him the Christians in each location faced may similar problems and thus, each letter is addressed to each separate community in its individual social setting, and only after that and through that to the Church in Asia as a whole[557].

Therefore, there is a micro-social milieu and macro-social milieu and the latter defines and determines the symbolic universe of the author. To put it in a paradox, the letters are addressed to individual communities in different social settings and the communities are one community living in one social setting. This is why they follow a stereotyped pattern. Put in other words, there are seven differing social settings but the source of the deprivation the seven communities suffer is the same. Therefore, here we are looking at seven different manifestations of, and hence responses to, the same deprivation.

Indeed some scholars have debated hotly results from a sociological analysis of Revelation and we are aware that the debate yielded diverse and sometimes irreconcilable stand-points. Be that as it may, the value of the findings of

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[557] *Ibid.*

the scholars involved in this debate compels us to revisit part of the debate once more without however the slightest intention of opening Pandora's box. From this debate we are interested in three lines of thought namely, Moffatt's "sociological objection to Ramsay's view of local references that we have just discussed above, Deissmann's view of the social status of the recipients of Revelation and the development of the thought thereafter and, Scobie's critique of the above lines of thought.

One of the major implications of Ramsay's theory of local references in the seven letters that we discussed in detail earlier is that the local Christians to which the letters were addressed, had a vivid civic consciousness and, or, were keenly sensitive to the historical and geographical features of their cities[558]. Moffat objects to this implication in particular and for him we have no reason to make such an assumption, rather we should take the recipients of the letters as a millenarian group totally divorced from surrounding society[559]. From what we have gathered so far about millenarian groups we do not think Moffatt's objection is easily sustainable. It is true that given the scanty nature of the data on the basis of which we can make deductions on the social status of the recipients of the letters and their relationship to the communities in which they lived, we may know very little about them but to conclude that they were totally divorced from their surrounding society is difficult to accept if we still char-

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[558] In W.R. Nicoll ed. *The Expositor's Gk Testament* London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1910. p. 285.
[559] C.H.H. Scobie, *Op. Cit.* p. 614.

acterise these recipients as a millenarian group (refer to our definition of millenarianism). It is in this context that scholars have found it inevitable to make deductions on the social standing of the recipients in a bid to arrive at their possible relationship with the surrounding society.

As early as Deissmann scholars generally assume that Christians came almost exclusively from lower social classes and their millenarian thought was a response to the deprivation of abject poverty (Revelation 2:9)[560]. This is the line of thinking we are taking in this study. However, we are aware of the criticism it has attracted.

The major critique that Scobie represents is that the Christians indeed represented various strata in society[561]. We accept this position and even the example that Scobie gives that the community at Laodicea, for example, appears to have been composed of the more economically well off and given the evidence in acts 19:31 the community at Ephesus, at least in Paul's day, must have had friends in high places, something that would have been impossible if these Christians belonged to the lowest classes in society. This is acceptable when we also think of Christians like Gaius who probably owned a plaza and in whose house the Corinthian congregation gathered (Romans 16:23). However, this does not mean these Christians did not suffer from deprivation. We have taken care of this diversity in the social standing of the Christians by proposing to talk about relative deprivation.

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[560] *Ibid.*
[561] *Ibid.*

We accept without hesitation Slater's conclusions on the letters to the seven churches. Indeed as letters they are certainly issue specific and logically this is why they deal specifically with the specific problems they deal with, what Scobie and company are referring to as local references. However, it would be fallacious to conclude from this that because the letters do not discuss the status of Christianity in the wider Asian social milieu the recipients were neither aware of nor were they connected to that milieu. Further we object to any suggestion that uses this as grounds to reject the connection between the letters and the apocalyptic visions in Revelation 4:1-19:21.We see a strong connection between the letters and the apocalyptic visions that not only strengthens our thesis but also vindicates it. First, we assert as others have done that contrary to the view of the proponents of the theory of local references in the letters to the seven churches, the letters are not only strictly connected to the apocalyptic visions in 4:1-19:2 but also serve to introduce those visions. Therefore, just as the apocalyptic visions in 4:1-19:21 do discuss the status of Christianity in the wider Asian social milieu, these letters too discuss this and as is our proposal here they serve to introduce that subject.

Slater has pretty much the same argument, which we narrate almost in all its details because our own thesis in this regard is a development and point of departure from his argument. Slater correctly observes that the visions relate the low esteem in which the Christian community was held, an aspect that in our own terminology has to do with the Christians' estimation of honour. The punishment pronounced in the visions is thus to be levied upon

those who oppressed the Christians[562] thereby affecting their estimation of honour. To the faithful who remain within the Christian community the visions communicate a salvific reward in the New Jerusalem[563]. It is here that Slater sees a serious misreading of these letters. For him proponents of the theory of the local references missed the point when they argued that because there is very little data in the letters relating to the wider Asian society the letters therefore do not contain evidence of suffering and, or, persecution. Correctly Slater argues that the admonitions to hear and to conquer in each of the seven letters have as their primary aim to retain persons within the sacred cosmos until the end (e.g. 2:7 and 22:2)[564]. So, the letters are instructions to the Christians whose aim is to enable them to survive the apocalyptic trials, which John envisages[565]. In other words, if the Christians adhere to the advice within the letters, they will endure the trial and punishments described in the apocalyptic visions and will enter the New Jerusalem and as Slater correctly points out, this argument explains both the theological connection between the letters and the visions and also why there is little data of any kind about the wider social setting of the Asian churches in the letters[566].

As a point of departure from Slater, we maintain that there is enough data to this effect. Slater himself does

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[562] T.B. Slater, *Op.Cit.* p. 240.

[563] *Ibid.*

[564] *Ibid.*

[565] *Ibid.*

[566] *Ibid.*

mention this. The letter to Smyrna (2:8-11) mentions tribulation, Jewish harassment impending imprisonment (by who if not by a social entity outside the church itself?), and ends with an admonition to faithful unto death (2:9-10) and the letter to Pergamum mentions the death of Antipas, "my witness" (2:13). We certainly do not think these are passing references to external issues. We also do not think that Slater's explanation that authors often reveal more in passing than in explicit comments[567] is enough. It is curious to note, as Slater himself does, that the only references to external matters are to the oppression of Christians something the author provides details of in the visions and the admonitions in the letters can only be understood more fully in this context of Christian oppression. We argue that what the author does is to introduce his main subject in the letters and deals with it in detail in the visions, which we think are still directed to the churches but in the general context of the Church at large.

Therefore, the socio-religious and political setting for the book of Revelation can be characterized as a harassment, ridicule and oppression to the extent that affected the Christians' estimation of honour. This, in our terminology is what we refer to as deprivation. The apocalyptic genre of the book of Revelation was constructed as a response to this deprivation. Hence, the message of the book of Revelation can be understood within the context of this response. In the next chapter we seek to demonstrate exactly this point.

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[567] *Ibid.,* p. 241.

CHAPTER 5: MILLENARIANISM AND THE MESSAGE OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Preliminary Remarks

We do not engage in a full-blown exegesis and verse-to-verse commentary of the book of Revelation. The purpose of this chapter is to vindicate our claim about millenarianism that we have been developing as a trajectory especially from chapter 2 whose concretisation we have just begun in the chapter immediately above drawing evidence largely from scholarly opinion. Thus, the approach in the previous chapter was largely deductive. In this chapter, we will exegete sections of Revelation in a bid to come up with internal pieces of evidence to support that claim and specific warrants for our key conviction and reasoning. In other words, we now seek to approach the data inductively as we seek to establish much more fully our thesis before we apply the paradigm and conceptual metaphor of millenarianism to contemporary millenarian movements in Zimbabwe in our concluding chapter.

To summarise the progress thus far, in chapter 1 we indicated that in this study we look at how the Bible, and in this case the book of Revelation, provides the basis for the discourse that originates the apocalyptic thought of the millenarian and hence, how the Bible acts as the fertile ground on which the millenarian thrives ideologically. Our claim in this case is that the Bible is the discourse that originates and sustains the apocalyptic thought of the millenarian.

In chapter 2 we refined and developed the claim further. We argued that the apocalyptic thought of the millenarian has its roots in Old Testament prophecy. We looked at Israelite prophecy as a social movement that we characterised as a millenarian sect. We argued that as is typical of a millenarian sect, the apocalyptic thought developed as the fruit of prophetic traditions from the past that the sect captured, metamorphosed, adopted and adapted to address contemporary challenges of deprivation. We observed that with each successive millenarian movement, as deprivation occurred the whole movement was stimulated into a radical response to external forces militating against it through adaptive innovations and prophetic traditions from the past formed the core of the cosmology of the movement.

At this point we once again refine and further develop our claim. We argue that the book of Revelation falls neatly into the paradigm we have established thus far. In the chapter immediately above we have established that the book of Revelation is arising from oppression mainly from the Domitian persecution. Like the millenarian movements behind the prophetic books we discussed earlier, the prophet John and the community behind him imported prophetic traditions from the past, reworked and adapted them to address their contemporary situation of deprivation. We claim that with Revelation the metamorphosis of systems and traditions from the past coagulates into what we deem the basic tenets of millenarianism.

We are aware of the lack of agreement among exegetes regarding the sources, literary form and structure of the book of Revelation. Positions on these matters fall in be-

tween two extremes. One extreme position is that Revelation has an orderly carefully thought out structure[568]. The other extreme position is that the book does not exhibit any discernable structure[569]. Other positions utilize strengths of each of the two extreme positions to arrive at structures of the book that represent compromises acceptable to the scholars that hold the middle positions in question. Already when we argued that the seven letters are introductions to the apocalyptic visions of Revelation 4:1-22:5 we were thus taking a position regarding the structure of the book. We do not fall prey to M. Hopkings' two-tier structure proposal; neither do we accept scholars like E. Fiorenza's view of a four-tier structure. We break down the book into several sections that follow the divisions by the author himself. We then derive a persistent trajectory that cuts across the sections that serves as a unifying theme that we take as the overall message of the author. Freed[570]proposes a structure that is in line with our suggestion and therefore while we do not arrive at the same conclusions as his, in our own endeavour we take his proposed structure as a guide. De Silva summarises our conviction well. For him Revelation unfolds in an orderly progression, containing many divergent indicators that give a sense of structure to the whole[571].

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[568] W.G. Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament.* London: SCM Press, 1975. p. 462.

[569] *Ibid.,* p. 463.

[570] E.D. Freed, *Op. Cit.,* pp. 360-365.

[571] D. A. De Silva, *Op. Cit.* p. 892.

We are equally aware of the lack of agreement among exegetes regarding the literary form of the book[572]. However, beginning with a determination of the genre of the text is a basic principle of exegesis, a basic principle of reading a text correctly. De Silva outlines the benefits of this starting point. According to him understanding the genre gives us a clue regarding the expectations and purpose of the text[573]. Therefore, the lack of agreement among exegetes regarding the genre of the book should not frighten us and discourage us from making our own determination of the literary genre of the text. Much of what we may want to say about the genre of Revelation we have already said in an earlier chapter. We pick here some argument that we reserved then because it was more relevant to the issues we are discussing now than the general discussion of the literary genre of the book.

As we stated earlier scholars have debated three genres as possible literary genres of the book. First they looked at the book of Revelation as a letter. Revelation 1:4 follows the basic pattern of letters in the rest of the New Testament. The sender is identified as John, the audience is the seven churches in Asia and as a typical New Testament letter there is a greeting with a benediction, "Grace to you and peace." In Revelation 1:4-8 the author announces several themes of importance for understanding the whole text in a manner similar to Paul who also introduced im-

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[572]   *Ibid.* De Silva offers a comprehensive survey of scholarly views on this matter. In principle our analysis of the message of the book is guided by De Silva's conviction on this page.

[573]   *Ibid.*

portant themes in his introduction[574]. The contribution that comes from this determination is that as we exegete the text we are cognizant of the fact that the book is a letter addressed seven very real communities of Christians spread across the Roman province of Asia[575] and as such the book is issue-specific. Thus, our interpretation of the text is less sensational but far more probing and penetrating.

However, some scholars have pointed out that the number seven is not to be taken literally. Seven in the ancient world symbolized perfection or completeness and therefore John may have symbolized the Catholic Church in its completeness[576]. In other words, reference to the seven churches was in fact reference to all Christian churches and not necessarily the specific churches that John identifies by their names. Some interpreters have carried this interpretation further and according to them, these seven churches represent the seven eras in church history, with the current era being the seventh and last[577].

We agree with De Silva's critique of this view especially the latter part of the view. This view has two chief weaknesses. The position fails to do justice to the fact that John addressed his work to seven real communities whose understanding and perception of reality he intended to shape and whose particular response to their very real circum-

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[574] *Ibid.*

[575] *Ibid.*

[576] E.D. Freed, *Op. Cit.* p. 360.

[577] D.A. De Silva, *Op. Cit.*

stances he intended to motivate[578]. Further, the view grossly caricatures the periods of church history it purports to describe, as if the essence of the Catholic or global Church in any era could be sketched out on a seven-verse canvas[579]. In any case there are absolutely no indications in the text that the seven churches should stand for successive epochs in the history of the church[580].

We maintain that indeed John wrote the text so that primarily it would make sense to its original audience especially by decoding the visions, and or, its images in the light of contemporary politics. In this sense, the book of Revelation as a letter is issue-specific in that it raises and grapples with issues that are specific to its original audience. However, we do not loose sight of our earlier position when we debated the theory of local references in the letters to the seven churches. We reiterate Ramsay's theory, which we have long since supported that the letters to the seven churches were not necessarily written separately, sent to each church and then later collected but rather they were published as a block along with the rest of the book and following the communication system established by the great trading companies of the time the whole book would thus be received first by the seven churches and then by the wider society through secondary circuits of communication that fed into the main circuit. Therefore, John probably had a micro-audience (the local churches) and a macro-audience (the Global Church)

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[578] *Ibid.*

[579] *Ibid.*

[580] *Ibid.*

symbolised by the number seven. Focus on the micro-audience helps us to arrive at the specific issues the author and the audience were grappling with and therefore the original intention and, or, purpose of the author. Focus on the macro-audience helps us to give universal application to those issues in a manner that hermeneutically allows us to forecast how our own history may unfold. Therefore, the genre of letter is an appropriate genre for the book of Revelation. However, it does not account for every characteristic of the book and hence, scholars have come up with other possible literary genres.

Some scholars look at Revelation as prophecy with some trying to be more specific than that distinguishing it not as Jewish prophecy but early Christian prophecy[581]. When we debated the questions of definition and authorship respectively, we discussed this literary genre and accepted it fully that Revelation is indeed a prophecy. Therefore, we do not repeat the detailed discussion we have entered into earlier. It suffices only to reiterate that position now that we are getting into yet another major debate regarding whether or not Revelation exhibits an orderly and careful structure. We use these debates not only to introduce our discussion of the content but also to give some pattern, basic structure and cohesion to the discussion on the content.

Concerning the structure of Revelation there are two extreme positions. One position is that Revelation exhibits

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[581] J.A. du Rand "Revelation" in *Guide to the New Testament Vol. VI* ed. by A.B. du Toit Pretoria: NGKB, 1988. p. 233 cf. W.G. Kümmel, *Op. Cit.* p. 461.

a coherent orderly structure, which is often explained down to details according to the principle of the number seven[582] (see the emphasis on the number seven in the letters visions of seals, trumpets and bowls and elsewhere in Revelation, the seven spirits in 3:12, seven heads in 5:6; 12:3; 17:3 and the seven angels in 8:2 and many other texts in the rest of the book). In very large portions of the book one can easily perceive divisions of the book into seven scenes or parts.

On the other extreme however, there are those scholars who argue that a close look at Revelation reveals that the book does not exhibit any discernable structure[583]. Instead, the book displays numerous doublets, for example, the seven trumpets and the seven bowls, the judgment of the world in 14:14 ff and 20:11 ff, the description of the heavenly Jerusalem in 21:1 ff and 21 ff and many other such doublets[584].

We argue that the book does exhibit a coherent structure but the coherence comes not just from the exclusive emphasis on the number seven but from certain themes that the author develops right from the beginning to the end. What appears as lack of any discernable structure and the appearance of, as it were, doublets are phenomena that arise from the author's style. As we argue below, in a typical apocalyptic fashion, the author moves back and forth as he brings forth scenes from the heavenly transcendental realm to the earth and vice-versa. As we

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[582] W.G. Kümmel, *Op. Cit.,* p. 463.
[583] *Ibid.*
[584] *Ibid.*

discuss the content of Revelation we are interested in these uniting trajectories and what they do to bring out the whole apocalyptic drama in Revelation. This analysis should help us to see how through the apocalyptic drama the millenarian movement behind the book is responding to deprivation.

Survey of the Content and Analysis of the Apocalyptic Discourse in Revelation

In our analysis of the content we adopt the order with which Freed discusses the content of Revelation but we differ with him regarding certain of his conclusions regarding the structure of the book. Freed, like us, agrees with the basic position that the book of Revelation has a clearly discernable structure. However, according to him the book is structured and unified around the number seven thus: the prologue in chapter 1; the letters to the seven Churches (chapters 2-3); then the Apocalypse proper (chapters 4:1-22:5) comprising introductory visions (chapters 4-5); vision of *seven* seals and their opening (6:1-8:1); visions of the *seven* trumpets and their blowing (8:2-11:19); *seven* visions of dragon, woman, and beasts (12:1-13:18); *seven* visions of the lamb and the angels (14:1-20); visions of the *seven* bowels of the wrath of God (15:1-16:21); *seven* visions of the end of Satan and the final victory of Christ (19:11-22:5) and finally the epilogue (22:6-21)[585].

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585   E.D. Freed *Op. Cit.* p. 356.

We argue that inasmuch as the number seven is crucial for the author of Revelation as a symbol, it is not the uniting factor holding the book together and giving it its clearly discernable structure. Emphasis on the number seven alone makes us blind of the whole gamut of apocalyptic symbols that the author adopts from past prophetic traditions and is utilizing to articulate his interpretation of the situation of deprivation him and the community of disciples around him find themselves in. For example, horns as a symbol of power (12:3; 13:1; 17:3); eyes as a symbol of knowledge (2:18; 4:6); white robes as a symbol of glory and purity (6:11; 7:9) and horses of various colours representing different calamities (6:2-8)[586]. These are symbols we came across earlier for example, in Zechariah, and we hinted on their significance then. In Revelation however, these symbols reappear much more frequently than before and they are definitely reinterpreted and utilized to bring out a clearly identifiable millenarian ideology.

This articulation and, or, reinterpretation of symbols from past prophetic traditions into an apocalyptic mental content or ideology that the resultant historical apocalyptic movement behind the book exercises is what unites the book and what gives it its clearly discernable structure. Thus, we argue in our analysis of the content below that in each of the divisions of the book that Freed proposes the author pursues a theme that brings to surface this apocalypticism. The author develops his apocalyptic ideology systematically from the very beginning right through

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[586] *Ibid.,* p. 355.

to the very last chapter. We trace how he does this immediately below.

First is the prologue (1:1-20) that Freed correctly divides into three segments that we also recognize namely first, the superscription (1:1-3), second, the epistolary greeting and theological summary (1:4-8) and third, the initial vision (1:9-20)[587]. The superscription, as we argued earlier, identifies the work both as an apocalypse, the revelation of Jesus Christ, and as words of prophecy. The way the possible final redactors of the work (who in our paradigm is the community of disciples around the prophet John) wrote the superscription shows that the redactors intended the work to be a typical example of a prophetic book. This vindicates the point we have been making all along especially in chapter 2 that both apocalypticism as a historical movement or social system and the apocalyptic mental content have their roots in prophecy. In fact, from the superscription alone we can deduce that the author of Revelation or its final redactors do not distinguish between the two, apocalypticism and prophecy.

The next division (1:4-8) is more interesting than the superscription because it is here that the author summarizes his theology and begins to expose the constituent features of his apocalyptic ideology. This division opens with the greetings to the seven churches. Freed agrees with scholars we cited earlier when we discussed the creative milieu of the book that the number seven in the greetings is not to be taken literally as the number seven in the

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[587]   *Ibid.*, p. 360.

ancient world symbolised perfection or completeness.[588] However, as we argued earlier we seek to go beyond this emphasis on the number seven as we expose the apocalyptic ideology and basic tenets of apocalypticism that hold together the book of Revelation as a unified whole. The author's apocalyptic ideology comes out in the theology or message that comes with the greetings.

In the greetings the author describes God as one "who is and who was and who is to come" meaning that he is eternal (1:4). However, what is more important as an apocalyptic tenet is that, in Freed's words, God is about to enter the scene of human history. (1:7)[589]. The author thus envisages the existence of two overlapping aeons, this aeon (*olam hozeh*) and the aeon to come (*olam habba*) with the latter consuming the former in a dramatic apocalyptic fashion. Following our definition of apocalypticism earlier this is a tenet of apocalypticism that we referred to as dualism. We argue that throughout the dominant feature of Revelation is the dualism between the two aeons, this age and the age to come, the earth and new heaven. This earth and aeon are temporary and under the control and tyranny of Satan who with his demons is tormenting the righteous. It is not surprising that as the author takes us through his message we move back and forth from (a) scene(s) in heaven, *olam habba,* to (a) scene(s) on the earth, *olam hozeh.*

So, although it is not immediately clear in the greetings, the real reason why God is to enter the scene of hu-

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588   *Ibid.*
589   *Ibid.*

man history is by way of intervention on behalf of his faithful ones who, as it were, have suffered enough (this is the theme the author immediately hints on in 1:9 and pursues throughout the book). Exactly this is what makes the thought pattern of the book apocalyptic. It should be noted that this intervention is through Jesus Christ who is the faithful witness and whose own suffering should give the readers comfort. Jesus Christ is the first born of the dead (that is the first person to be raised from the dead- what Paul calls the first fruits). In an apparent allusion to a past tradition in Psalm 89:27 Jesus Christ is thus the first born, the highest of the kings of the earth (1:5). Again in an apparent allusion to Psalm 89:28 through his love Jesus Christ forgave the sins of the suffering readers who are the new people of God. So, like most of the New Testament writers, the author shares the view that the Christians are the new people of God, a new Israel or a new kingdom of priests. This view appears to take root from Exodus 19:6 and most New Testament books like Acts and Hebrews also allude to it. Texts like I Peter 2:9 make explicit reference to Exodus 19:6 and like the rest of the New Testament apply the designation "royal priest-hood, a holy nation, God's own people" to the Christians believing in Jesus Christ's name.

What is crucial for us is the author's use of two traditions from the past, first, the Son of Man tradition that the author uses to establish an immediate link between Jesus Christ and the Son of Man seen in a vision by the prophets like Daniel (Daniel 7:13). The second link with a tradition from the past is the apparent link between Zechariah 12:10 and the events on the cross. We deal with the Son of

Man tradition later because we intent to use it for further uses later. So, we comment briefly on the tradition from Zechariah 12:10 first.

When the author of Revelation picks up the tradition from Zechariah he accents the idea of "mourning for the one pierced" and this gives a new twist and meaning to the text. Revelation points out that indeed Jesus Christ will return as Son of Man and this is the eschatology typical of the rest of the other New Testament books but Revelation emphasises the idea of those who "pierced him" in Daniel 7:13 and Zechariah 12:10 (also referred to in John 19:37). In a special way that makes the tradition apocalyptic the author focuses on those who crucified Jesus Christ, those who pierced him and according to this author they will lament for what they did or as is the translation in the RSV, they "will wail on account of him."

This is what is of interest to us. The author of Revelation is not explicit concerning what the expression "to wail on account of him" means exactly and we think this is deliberate on his part. Does this mean those who pierced him will be avenged for their deed or piercing him is rather a metaphorical reference to rejecting both Christ and the Christian faith in which case therefore, all those (all the tribes of the earth) who rejected Christ and the Christian faith will be judged accordingly? We agree with the motion that the readers of Revelation were living during a time much later than Jesus' resurrection and ascension, which implies that they were probably second or even third generation Christians. Thus, they did not participate in the events at the cross and therefore, there was no way they would have physically pierced Jesus. If

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they pierced Jesus Christ it would have to be indirectly through persecuting Jesus' faithful ones. We argue that this view is not far fetched, as it must have been shared by a number of other New Testament writers. For example, this is the view that seems to come out explicitly from Acts 9:4, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" It is most unlikely that this is a view that Luke alone held. If we accept that Luke-Acts and Revelation were contemporary works it is logical to surmise then that this was an idea that more authors than one in the New Testament held. So, as with many other New Testament authors, the author of Revelation assumes that when people persecuted the Christians they were in fact persecuting or piercing Jesus Christ.

To this end the author of Revelation does two things to our thesis. Already right from the beginning of his book the author allows the apocalyptic tenet of the vindication of the faithful to germinate and grow slowly through the chapters. This vindicates our thesis. However, second and what is more important as a vindication of our thesis, the author develops the theme of Christ's suffering and the persecution of the Christians, which is an apparent reference to deprivation and this suits our thesis well. Our point comes out clearly when we analyse closely what the author does with the Son of Man tradition from Daniel.

In the next division (1:9-20) we come across the initial vision, which as Freed rightly points out, is an allusion to Ezekiel 1:28 and Isaiah 6:5[590]. However, in this division the apocalyptic tenet of dualism becomes richer in mean-

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[590]   E.D. Freed, *Op. Cit.,* p. 361.

ing in that it becomes both multidimensional and sharper especially as it becomes more explicit and, or, pronounced than before. Similarly, the symbolism becomes not only deep but also diverse in its signification. This vindicates our earlier point that the author is developing the apocalyptic mental content in the subsequent chapters and it is this and the progressing manifestation of apocalypticism that hold the book of Revelation together and accord it its coherent, orderly structure.

The author appears to utilize the prophetic literary device of theophany we find especially in Isaiah 6 and Ezekiel 1. However, what makes the symbolism in Revelation richer is that the author uses in an imaginative way the theophany tradition in combination with two other past traditions namely the tradition of the Sabbath from Genesis and the tradition of the Day of the Lord that appears in almost all the prophetic books in the Old Testament. He uses this combination to depict and articulate the condition of deprivation that he and his readers find themselves in, particularly why as an apocalyptic movement they should be comforted by the person on Jesus Christ that comes out of the author's description in the book and what Jesus is going to do.

So, with this purpose in mind the author then describes his vision within the context of the temple just as Isaiah does but unlike Isaiah, he utilizes the apocalyptic language of Daniel to describe vividly the exalted Christ in heaven. This Jesus Christ possesses the sword that not only symbolises his effective powerful word but also his kingship and his white hair symbolises purity. In a very creative way that is typical of him, in 1:10 the author in-

troduces the Sabbath as a conceptual metaphor of the Day of the Lord. This is quite imaginative because this is the only time that the concept of the day of the Lord appears in the New Testament especially with the kind of meaning that it carries in the book of Revelation. For the author the Sabbath is the Lord's Day. However, what is more interesting in terms of the author's imagination is what he proceeds to do with this conceptual metaphor. It seems the author utilises the semantic principle of antithetical relations to introduce a contrast between the Day of the Lord and a day in the week, which according to Freed was known as the emperor's day or the Lord's Day as well[591]. Thus, as Freed correctly observes the conception of the Day of the Lord in revelation becomes more meaningful as a contrast[592].

The symbols of the sword and white hair show that Jesus Christ is Lord whose kingship surpasses by far that of the emperor in both power and purity. The reference to the Sabbath viewed within the context of sabbatical typologies makes the symbolism of the number 7 richer in that not only does it symbolise perfection or completeness but also victory. The reference reminds us that during creation, after gaining victory over cosmic chaos, God rested on the seventh day and to celebrate this victory the concept of the Sabbath came into being. Thus, the number 7 also symbolises the sabbatical victory whose source is God. We argue that the frequency of the number 7 in this text in particular is by no means an accident. With his

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[591]   *Ibid.*
[592]   *Ibid.*

sword in his hand, Jesus Christ introduces himself as the victorious king of kings whose kingship is pure unlike that of the emperors. For this reason he is the real Lord. His appearance to the author indeed marks the real Day of the Lord and therefore, in awe the author falls before the real Lord. As Jesus stands with his sword, he marks the decisive intervention of God into the scene of human history. This act ensuing from the throne of God is meant to save the faithful remnant. This way the author takes the apocalyptic tenet of the vindication of the faithful a step further towards yet another tenet of apocalypticism.

We noted in our definition of apocalypticism in chapter 2 that within the apocalyptic ideology there is an urgent expectation of the impending overthrow all the earthly conditions in the immediate future, what some scholars refer to as imminence[593]. We sense this kind of apocalyptic aura in this segment of the book of Revelation. However, what is more interesting as an apocalyptic tenet, a new salvation lies beyond the catastrophe that God destined for the faithful remnant and this transition from disaster to final redemption takes place by means of an act issuing from the throne of God hence, the visibility of the Kingdom of God here on earth[594].

Thus, already in chapter 1 the foundation is laid for much of what the author proceeds to say culminating in the vivid description of the visible Kingdom of God as the New Jerusalem, the New Heaven and Earth that feature

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[593] J.C. Beker, *Paul's Apocalyptic Gospel. The Coming Triumph of God* Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982. p. 136.
[594] *Ibid.*

most in the last two chapters of the book. Hence, our point remains valid that the author consciously or otherwise introduces basic tenets of apocalypticism at appropriate stages in his narration and develops them in a way that brings coherence to the whole book.

Immediately after this initial vision, we then come to the letters to the seven churches in 2:1-3:22. We are quite aware that earlier we discussed these letters in detail. At this point we discuss them once more but with a different motivation and, or, purpose. We cannot avoid discussing all sections of the content as each section has an apocalyptic tenet of interest. However, we try to avoid points of discussion that we raised before unless they clarify further the argument we are at present pursuing. As such, the discussion of the letters now may be brief.

As we argued earlier, the letters follow a specific format, but Freed develops this point in a manner that interests us. According to Freed the letters follow a four-tier format, first, an introductory formula, "I know you..." to describe the church's condition; a complement and warning; promise to those who remain firm or faithful in the time of oppression and last, an exhortation to all the churches that usually comes at the end of the letter, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says to the churches."

The fixed format that the letters take is quite appropriate for the apocalyptic purposes of the author, especially the latter three aspects of the format. We argue that the theory of local references in the letters, which we discussed in detail earlier, fails to make a connection between the first aspect, that is, the description of the

church's condition, and the rest of the format of the letter, but what is more serious as a weakness of the theory, it fails to place emphasis on the latter three aspects bringing to surface the apocalyptic significance of the three aspects of the letters and therefore, the close connection between these letters and the apocalypse proper that follows in 4:1-22:5. Our earlier conclusion that opposed the theory of local references is premised on a holistic analysis of the letters that places emphasis on all four aspects of the letters' format.

First, a surface analysis of the description of the conclusion of each church gives us the impression that we are dealing with a religious problem threatening the faith of the believers in that church. This indeed is the basic assumption and premise of the theory of local references. We reserved the analysis we are at present making until now because it is more closely connected to the present part of our thesis than the earlier analysis of the historical situation of the book.

An analysis of the specific problem of each church against the background of a holistic exegesis of the whole section 2:1-3:22, may lead the critical exegete to conclude that the threat facing each of the churches is not specific to the individual churches but broader than that and also it is not just religious but political. Below we offer a holistic analysis of all seven churches and draw the kind of conclusion we are proposing here.

We have reference to the problem or threat of Nicolaitans in two churches at Ephesus and Pergamum respectively; the synagogue of Satan in Smyrna and Philadelphia respectively; Jezebel in Thyatira and the problem of soiled

garments in Sardis and Laodicea respectively. The traditional interpretation is that all these were religious problems that posed or indicated some threat to the Christian faith either from the Jews or Gentiles[595].

We argue that the latter posed the most serious threat in the form of imperial power. While at the surface the threat to each church seems specific to that particular church and appears to be a religious one we argue otherwise. We analyse briefly each of the threats outlined below. First, we look at the problem of the Nicolaitans and then provide a link between this threat and the rest as we drive home our thesis at this juncture.

The general view is that the teaching of the Nicolaitans was a religious heresy that was antinomian in orientation prevalent both at Ephesus and Pergamos[596]. The sect that held this religious view was accused of compromising with pagan idolatry and of being libertine Gnostics[597]. Those that remain at a religious analytical plain, especially critics among the laity, go a step further to argue that this was a religious heresy that elevated those in the ministry over and above the ordinary people[598].

This analysis is not penetrative enough as it does not shed light on the political dimensions of the threat of the Nicolaitans. The etymology of the Greek term that is translated as Nicolaitans has political implications. The

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[595]. E.D. Freed, *Op. Cit.*

[596] W. Barnstones, "Apocalypse" in COMMANDMENT.html.

[597] *Ibid.*

[598] Blessed Hope Ministries – International Glossary of Terms. http://www.bhm.dircon.co.uk/glos.html.

term is derived from the Greek word των Νικολαιτων. The genitive participle appears to have been derived from the verb Νικαω, meaning "I conquer" and the noun λαος, meaning, "people". Therefore, Νικολαος may be translated literally to mean "conqueror of people"[599]. We argue that this is language that transcends the religious plain. W. Barnstones' comment in this regard is particularly important. Looking at the text with the eye of a poet Barnstones argues that the Greek word Νικολαος is wordplay parallel to Balaam (Rev 2:14-15), from the Hebrew term *bilam*, meaning, "he destroyed people"[600]. Barnstone's argument here not only vindicates our point at this juncture but also helps us to make the necessary link between the threat of the Nicolaitans at Ephesus and Pergamos and the teaching of Balaam. The author discusses the problem of Balaam in detail in 2:14 under threats to Pergamos (Pergamum) and it is interesting that in this connection he mentions Balak, king of Moab during the Exodus and desert wanderings. At this point it becomes apparent that the author is not referring only to religious figures here but rather he is deep into politics.

Pergamum is not just associated with Nicolaitans and the teachings of Balaam. Pergamum is accused of housing Satan's throne and killing a faithful witness of the Lord, Antipas. Antipas was, according to tradition, butchered and roasted to death in a bronze kettle by the devotees of the imperial cult at Pergamum[601] and it is in this

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[599]   *Ibid.*
[600]   W. Barnstones *Op. Cit.*
[601]   *Ibid.*

sense that the characterisation of Pergamum as "the place where Satan lives" probably came into use. This designation of the city as "housing the throne of Satan" immediately links the threat at Pergamum to the threat at Smyrna wherein there is also a "synagogue of Satan". This in itself vindicates our conviction that the problems the churches are facing are first and foremost, strictly related, and second, they are not only religious but also political. The use of the word Jezebel in connection with the threat at Thyatira is very interesting. The name itself reminds us of the Canaanite Queen of Ahab and in this case it conjures the image of a political power interfering with the faith of the audience/recipients of the letter. However, the interference probably went before mere interference to include the use of force and other aggressive means designed to coerce the recipients to become devotees of the imperial cult.

Our observation would hold more water following an analysis of the geographical location of the churches and how this relates to the threats to each of the seven churches. This analysis strengthens more our intuition particularly our observation that all seven cities as we show in the maps below (fig. 2 and fig. 3) belonged to a region that was once the Seleucid province of Lydia (see fig. 3). This is significant because the Seleucid legacy that probably began with Antiochus IV Epiphanes of attacking religion for political gain was still very much in place, at least among the local political leadership now working for, and reporting to, the Roman emperor.

There has been a lot of conjecture among scholars about the character and operations of Antiochus IV and

most of his critics regard him as a cruel, senseless Seleu-
cid king who was out of his mind when he attacked the
Jews and their religion. It is not our intention to get into
the various critiques raised by different scholars because
we do not want to diverge too much from the argument at
hand. However, overall commentators adopt without hesi-
tation the Jews' characterization of Antiochus IV as *epi-
manes* meaning mad man[602]and this is quite fitting if we
understand his doings purely from a religious perspective.
However, a re-examination of his actions against the
background of the events leading to his attack on the Jews
and their religion from a socio-political perspective allows
us to appreciate his actions and understand his moves
with a fresh and broad mind. We have often wondered
whether it may not be valid to consider Antiochus IV as a
political genius.

We revisit the events leading to the attack on the Jews
and their religion in a bid to expose the possible rationale
behind each step that Antiochus IV took during the at-
tack. Again we do not review the whole history of this part
of the Inter-testament period because the fine details of
the controversies surrounding the historical happenings
of the time and their intricacies are not our focus. We dis-
cuss only those events that we consider major and rele-
vant enough to form the premise for our conclusion at
this point. Our summary, especially our historical stance

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[602] R.P. Martin, *New Testament Foundations A Guide For Christian Stu-
dents Vol. 1: The Four Gospels.* Exerter: The Paternoster Press LTD.,
1975. p. 56.

is a reconciliation of various positions of selected scholars who studied the period in question[603].

Most scholars who studied the period in question agree in principle that Antiochus IV inherited the throne from Antiochus III who had just defeated the Ptolemies[604]. Like the Ptolemies Antiochus III was liberal in his approach in that he allowed his subjects who included the Jews to practice their own religion and culture[605]. Trouble for the Jews came when the Romans, defeated Antiochus III as most of the sources state, at the battle of Magnesia[606]. It would appear the Romans then were not interested in territorial expansion but tribute in term of tax. Antiochus III passed on the burden to his subjects who were probably not prepared to shoulder that burden. Unfortunately Antiochus III died before he could redress the situation.

When Antiochus IV took over he was probably aware that he was inheriting a hot throne and so he decided to redress the situation immediately. The obvious thing to do was to fight the Romans who were the source of his problem. However, like any wise politician, he weighed his military might against that of the Romans and did not feel he was strong enough to fight them. Probably it was then that he decided to consolidate his power by increas-

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[603] We summarize and reconcile mainly the findings from Ralph, P. Martin, *New Testament Foundations vol. 1*; E. Lohse, *The New Testament Environment* London: SCM Press, 1976; and recently, C. L. Bloomberg, *Jesus and the Gospels*, Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1997, pp. 5-18. D. A. De Silva, *Op. Cit.* pp. 37-47.

[604] E. Lohse*, Op. Cit.* p. 22.

[605] *Ibid.*

[606] R.P. Martin, *Op. Cit.*

ing his grip on the Ptolemies in Egypt so that he would not have to fight the battle from two fronts. However, for his mission in Egypt to succeed Antiochus IV would have to pass through Palestine and so he badly needed the support of the Jews in Palestine. Thus, Palestine became a region of strategic importance.

His mission would be successful if the Jews would be loyal to him and would follow him sheepishly. He had two options, either to persuade or to force the Jews to do so. Sources agree in principle that following ill advice and unwarranted suspicion Antiochus IV did not think the Jews would be persuaded to be loyal to him and so he chose the latter option.

It is here that we seek to understand Antiochus IV's actions from both the psychology and sociology of collective behaviour. There is a sense in which we could understand Antiochus IV's moves in terms of a power-oriented movement[607]. As is typical of a leader of any power-oriented movement, Antiochus IV was perhaps of the conviction that with power evil can be eradicated and would have discounted any notion of persuasion for this reason[608]. Again as is typical in a movement of this kind, the tactics he employed were aggressive and violent as he took an embattled stance in a bid to concentrate total

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[607] J. Wilson, *Introduction To Social Movements* New York: Basic Books INC., Publishers, 1973. p. 16.

[608] We get this characterization of this kind of social movement from J. Wilson, *Introduction To Social Movements*, New York: Basic Books, INC., Publishers, 1973. pp. 16-17. Wilson says much more and is mainly focused on discussing the movements in general. We apply his descriptions and general taxonomy to our own context.

socio-cultural power in his hands. However, unlike similar movements where gaining power is not a means to a more ultimate, ideologically defined end, we argue that in the case of Antiochus IV, there was an ultimate, ideologically defined end.

Antiochus IV decided to eradicate completely Jewish culture and identity. From both a psychological and social scientific critical perspectives respectively, a people without a culture and identity are without a direction too. They are more likely to follow sheepishly the dictates of a social group they consider superior especially the group in power that usually downplays their strengths and achievements. So, Antiochus IV adopted a radical policy of Hellenism to achieve this goal. Key features of Judaism were banned namely, observing the Sabbath, going to the temple or synagogue for worship, reading the *Torah,* and practising circumcision. By attacking these features of Judaism Antiochus IV hoped to weaken the bonds of unity among the Jews, as these were the features that gave them a sense of belonging and the basic rationale behind their existence as an *amphictyony.* He introduced pagan worship among the Jews erecting the statue of Zeus Olympios in the temple at Jerusalem and the statue of Zeus Xenois in the temple at Mount Gerazim[609]. This would make the Jews lose focus and be divided, as some would out fear choose to worship the statues. He considered himself a manifestation of God and assumed the title *Epiphanes* meaning God-manifest. This would propagate and entrench among the Jews the myth of his divinity.

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[609] R.P. Martin, *Op. Cit.*

Therefore, although his policy did not succeed we still can conclude that his attack on the Jews and their religion was a deliberate and systematic move meant to achieve an ultimate, ideologically defined political end. Thus, what appeared as a religious threat for the Jews on a local scale was in fact a political problem on a regional scale.

It is most unlikely that the situation was any different at the time when the book of Revelation was written. Indeed regimes come and go but succeeding regimes often learn from, and adopt, the objectives and leadership styles of past regimes. Therefore, while there was a historical and socio-political gap between the period of Antiochus IV and the time of writing of the book of Revelation, it is valid to assume that the political tactics, the objectives and the leadership styles of past regimes especially Antiochus IV's had some influence that was still felt by the regime contemporary to the author of Revelation. The impact and influence of the leadership style of past regimes on succeeding regimes do not easily fade away like morning dew. Hence, we have no reason to believe that the succeeding regimes especially the local leadership that probably was still largely Syrian at the time of writing the book of Revelation had changed from this kind of leadership style. Therefore, most likely the attack on the Christian faith appeared to be religious on a local scale but on a wider regional scale it was in fact political.

Thus too, on a local scale each church appears to face a problem that is specific to itself but on a larger scale these individual problems amount to one big political threat threatening the whole Church. It is for this reason that the writer of the book of Revelation invoked the apocalyp-

tic message that would speak to both the local churches and the Church at large. There would be no reason to speak in apocalyptic language if the reasons for speaking were purely religious. Hidden language, coded language is usually invoked in situations where speaking in plain language poses serious dangers on the speaker. Such was the socio-political environment surrounding the prophet John and the community of disciples around him. The message coming out of John was a typical response to this, a typical articulation of the situation of *galut* the churches and Church were suffering and John was offering the vision necessary for survival and chatting the way forward.

Freed summarizes the message neatly. In this crisis of oppression the Church must remain loyal to its faith when oppressed[610]. Our point regarding oppression from without becomes clearer when we discuss the apocalypse proper at the centre of which is the imperial power and therefore it is in this regard that we agree with Freed that the writer's message to the churches in chapters 2 and 3 becomes a message to the whole Church in the rest of the book[611] and it is for this reason also that we disagree with the theory of local references we discussed earlier that seeks to divorce the letters to the seven churches from the apocalypse proper. We argue that the letters to the seven churches are indeed a necessary introduction to the body of apocalypse.

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[610] E. D. Freed, *Op. Cit.*
[611] *Ibid.*

The apocalyptic tenet of the vindication of the faithful that the author develops in the rest of the body of apocalypse takes root and comes out clearly in the brief messages to the churches. The faithful must remain loyal. Christ himself will soon come to save the Church and vindicate his faithful ones. Perseverance becomes a key apocalyptic tenet necessary for survival until the end. This becomes a theme that the author introduces here and maintains throughout the book. It becomes a key factor uniting the letters to the seven churches and the rest of the book of Revelation.

It is interesting to note sudden recurrence of the apocalyptic imagery of the eye beginning in 2:18 that we came across earlier in the books of Ezekiel and Zechariah respectively. When we discussed it then, we concluded that it symbolised special knowledge or insight revealed to a chosen few, the faithful ones. This is a typical apocalyptic trait consistent with the apocalyptic tenet of the vindication of the faithful and perseverance as an apocalyptic virtue that we see developing into the apocalypse proper in 4:1 – 22:5. It becomes useful *definiens* for the author who looks at his words of prophecy as special knowledge and revelation from God. We immediately begin discussing the apocalypse proper. While we discuss it chapter-by-chapter we do not intent a verse-to-verse commentary of the book of Revelation. As we did above, we highlight only those issues in the chapters that are relevant as basic premises for our thesis. So our exegetical comments are quite selective in this regard.

We argue, as do others, that the author's use of prophecy is without contrast. Following our suggested paradigm

and conceptual metaphor, the author recaptures traditions from the past, reworks or metamorphoses and adopts them to address challenges from within that are represented in the letters to the seven churches and serious challenges from without, a new situation of *galut,* serious oppression from outside described vividly in symbols throughout the book of Revelation.

The themes that the author provides hints to in the superscription, that too are summarised succinctly in the epistolary greeting and indirectly referred to in the letters to the seven churches, now come out explicitly in the apocalyptic drama that unfolds in a series of visions in 4:1-22:5.

First we have introductory visions in 4:1-5:14 whose setting is heaven and are cast within a judicial setting with God on his throne. We take interest in key traditions from the past to which the author provides hints. Interesting traditions that the author picks are those from Ezekiel 1:4-28; 2:9-10; Isaiah 6:1-8 cf. 1 Kings 19:22-23; Psalm 33:3; 141:2, 47:2-9. It would appear as if the contrast hinted on earlier between Christ and the emperor continues but this time it becomes more explicit and the author takes it to a higher level. God's throne is contrasted with the throne of the emperor. God's sovereignty that, according to Freed, is symbolized by the precious and stones on his throne surpasses without comparison the emperor's sovereignty[612]. The author develops the contrast to the conclusion that unlike the emperor, with God we do not just see a king but the creator of all things who is therefore worthy

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[612]   *Ibid.,* p. 362.

of receiving glory, honour and power (4:11). Hence, because he created all things he is judge of all things, sitting in the throne and ready to open the seven-sealed scroll[613]. However, God himself does not open the scroll. The author quickly introduces Jesus Christ in chapter 5. Because of his redeeming death Jesus Christ the Messiah of David and powerful lamb (5:5) is worthy to receive and open the scroll. This becomes an introduction to the visions of the seven seals and their opening (6:1-8:1).

In these visions the author explains and gives justification to the *galute* that the devotees are suffering. This explanation and justification is knowledge, special revelation that is privy only to the chosen. The Christology that comes out in the visions is that Jesus Christ is not just the messiah of David, but the powerful lamb that opens the seven seals showing that he is the eschatological ruler of the world whose one suffering marked the final end of the present aeon and the beginning of the final judgement[614].

The author utilizes past traditions from Zechariah 1:8-11 to describe this apocalyptic crisis which from the surface is a crisis of yielding to false teaching or to the emperor cult. We argue that the latter was the real problem as it was not just a religious problem but also a serious political problem that influenced the author to invoke the language and ideology of apocalyptic. We argue that, following the typical political agenda similar to that of Antiochus IV, the imperial powers attacked John and his audi-

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613   *Ibid.*
614   *Ibid.*

ence and this attack was motivated by political concerns. The symbolism of chapter 6 confirms our intuition here.

The author, like the prophet Zechariah sees a vision of horses, the first being white and the second, red. This symbolism has been subject to various interpretations. One interpretation especially with the mention of a rider with a bow, is that the writer is alluding to the Romans' defeat of the Parthians (who were Rome's enemy in the east) in AD62[615]. Another interpretation is that since the Roman army was conquering the world and since its generals rode on white horses after victories the author may be alluding to these conquests[616]. Freed is correct that the red horse is symbolic of rebellion or civil strife (Mark 13 makes such a prediction during the end times) but we have reservations about his further point that the author was perhaps alluding to the civil war that took place for more than a century before Augustus was emperor[617]. He is correct too when he says that the black horse symbolises famine but again we have reservations on his further conclusion that the author was therefore alluding to the shortage of grain during the time of Domitian[618].

We argue that these symbols must have meant much more for the author of Revelation. An analysis of the use of seals in symbols especially in the light of studies by scholars like L.A. Vos shows that seals depict in summary form the imminent eschatological future, not past or pre-

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[615]   *Ibid.*

[616]   *Ibid.*

[617]   *Ibid.*, p. 363.

[618]   *Ibid.*

sent events, though past and contemporary events may provide images for describing the future[619]. Therefore although the past and contemporary events offered images with which the author described his apocalyptic visions what he had in mind was probably an end to the strife and hardships brought by drought but more interesting an end to the suffering inflicted on the believers by political leadership because of their faith. We argue that the author uses hyperbolic language and bitter images of terror when he sees those in heaven rejoicing at the suffering of sinners on earth, something typical of the bitter exhortations of prophets like Joel (2:10-11), Amos (5:18-20) and Hosea (10:8) not because he enjoyed the suffering of sinners but that this is a ploy aimed at magnifying suffering as a warning to those who are still alive. It is probably still very much alive in the mind of the author and his audience that any political defeat on their part meant that their deity was also defeated. So, the author uses this hyperbolic language to put across a very serious message to his audience that it is better to die than yield to the imperial pressure. Drawing parallels from the prophet Zechariah, the author argues that the white horse and its bowman shall prevail ("a crown was given to him and he went out conquering and to conquer" 6:26). After all by the time the sixth seal is opened God would have taken control and he will descend in an earthquake and all the kings of the earth, generals, the rich and strong shall run to hide and

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[619] A.Y. Collins, "The Apocalypse (Revelation)," in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary Student Edition* Ed. By R.E. Brown (et. al.) Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall Inc., 1993. p. 1004.

shall wish the mountains fell on them than to face the wrath of the Lamb (6:12-17). So the author envisages this mighty warrior Christ defeating those exercising their political might to oppress the weak.

If the author were talking about political issues as we are arguing then it would have been dangerous to do so using plain language. It is also interesting to note that when doing so even the tense changes. As it is typical of apocalyptic discourse past history is written in the future tense. However, the interpretation of the future tense both in Greek and Hebrew also has the imperative dimension and this speaks volumes of the urgency of the issues addressed. It is in this context that the author issues the warning we discussed above. The faithful must remain faithful; they must persevere because after all these great men, the army generals are children of darkness who are nothing in front of the Lamb. This is the theme the author continues in the next chapters.

Chapter 7, as Freed correctly points out, is an interlude before the author talks about the opening of the seventh seal[620]. The great suffering or the consternation of the kings of the earth, great men and generals and others described in Chapter 6 is contrasted with the bliss of the elect in heaven. Again the theme of the vindication of the faithful rewarded for their perseverance comes out openly. The dualism continues. This time it is not just limited to the contrast and movement back and forth between heaven and earth, but it also now includes the contrast between two groups of actors, the children of dark-

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[620]   E.D. Freed, *Op. Cit.*

ness who at present appear mighty, strong and are persecuting the second group of those who appear weak but are faithful to the lamb and therefore, who are the children of the light.

Interesting is the Christology that the author adopts and the descriptors that accompany the author's Christ. The Christology is that of the Lamb who is bringing about his wrath. This is typical apocalyptic Christology. The lamb is no longer gentle anymore but he is a Warrior Christ that places the children of the darkness under his feet. He is about to, or is already pronouncing judgement on the unfaithful. The tradition of the remnant frequently pronounced in the prophets resurfaces and is comes together with theme of vindication. Suffering is unavoidable for God's people, the elect but as the chosen few they will survive. Once the seventh seal is opened (8:1) this opens way to the visions of the seven trumpets and their blowing. So, it seems the opening of the seventh seal is a prelude and link to the visions of the trumpets in 8:2-11:19. However, it is not immediately clear whether these visions of the trumpets are coming out of the now opened seventh seal or there are separate but there is a close link between chapters 8:2-11:9 and the words in 7:3 "do not harm earth...till we have sealed the servants of God upon their foreheads". Suffering was coming and it was unavoidable but those who were sealed upon their foreheads would survive. In 8:1 when the seventh seal is opened there is silence in heaven for about half an hour. Maybe this is because of what was going to come out of this seventh seal, the huge suffering proceeding from each trumpet blown.

The theme of the survival and vindication of the remnant, God's people, persists. It seems the author alludes to another tradition from the past, the Exodus. There is, as Freed puts it, going to be a new Exodus of God's people from the powers of the earth but before this exodus there is going to be cosmic upheavals[621] and this to us is a typical apocalyptic trait. From the text itself, it appears the seven trumpets symbolise God's wrath during these cosmic upheavals. As is typical of apocalyptic ideology these catastrophes are going to ensue from the throne of God, who as in 8:1-6 is sitting on the throne with the host of heaven. The context is that of the temple. It seems alongside the theme of the remnant the author pursues the theme of the restoration of the temple. Although destroyed the temple is still valid and it will be restored.

For the interpretation of the rest of the visions in this block, we agree with Freed's interpretation only that we note, as is our interest, everywhere where traditions from the past are used. Each trumpet signals an attack or the ensuing of a catastrophe on a different part of the world. The attacks are partial and are meant as a warning about what is to come for those who do not repent (9:18). As was the case with the sixth and seventh seals, there is an interlude between the sixth and seventh trumpets (10:1-11:14)

During this interlude there is a shift of events from heaven to earth. It is interesting to note that the purpose of this shift is to encourage and comfort the faithful readers, the remnant. Indeed the imagery of the angel and the little scroll in this interlude is difficult to interpret but of

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621   *Ibid.*

interest to us is the author's use of traditions from the past and in some instances citing past prophets almost verbatim, for example, Daniel 12:4-9, Ezekiel 1:28; 2:8 (this comes out almost verbatim in Revelation10:9-10) 2:9-3:1-3; 40:3-6; Psalm 29:1-10; Amos 7:7-9 and Zechariah 2:1-2.

Another interesting thing for us is the author's focus on Jerusalem and the temple. Freed's interpretation that the author interprets these two items in terms of the Christian understanding of the body of Christ[622] does not quite come out clearly from the text. However, it is clear from the text that the tradition of the destruction of Jerusalem as per our paradigm is adopted from the past, but the author utilizes the tradition from Zechariah 2 (where the temple is measured) to demarcate sacred and profane space and then discusses the intervention of God in the restoration of his people, the temple and the Holy city.

There will be two witnesses, who according to Freed, are Moses and Elijah, Moses representing the law (Ex 7:14-21) and Elijah representing prophecy (1 Kings 17-19 and 2 Kings 1:9-10) both in which the coming of the Messiah is predicted[623]. This is also consistent with the Jewish tradition that these two men are expected to return before the Messiah came (Deuteronomy 18:15-18; Malachi 4:4-6; Matthew 17:10-12). It is here where we see an immediate link with the Gospels, as this appears to be an allusion to the transfiguration where these two figures also appeared.

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[622] *Ibid.*
[623] *Ibid.*

It is interesting that in all these traditions the two figures are victorious.

The author in 11:7-13 summarizes what is to come in 12:1-13:18, that is, the theme of opposition to God in the form of the dragon and the beast. A beast is going to ascend from the bottomless pit to find the two witnesses. They will die and the children of the darkness, those who dwell on the earth, will rejoice exchanging gifts, while the faithful in fear only gaze at the dead bodies. However, this victory is only short lived as God will put the breath of life in the two and they shall rise and fear will fall upon those who saw them. Thus, the glory of God will be made manifest.

So, even though the author is to describe many fearful things that may imply the death of "Moses" and "Elijah" faithful witnesses of God, the faithful are not to be afraid for God is in control (11:15) and will be victorious as he is the source of the breath of life that will raise them from the dead. With this message the author then describes the events proceeding after the blowing of the seventh trumpet. Events shift back to heaven and in 11:15-19 there is a lot of rejoicing and celebration at the victory of God as he brings the kingdom of the world to become his and that of his Christ. This summarizes in a very interesting way, the theme of victory that the author pursues throughout.

We spent quite some time discussing the seven visions of the woman, dragon and beast (12:1-3:18) because it is at this point that we pick up one of the disputes we outlined at the beginning of the chapter, that is, the place of Jesus in Revelations, and perhaps use our insights here to link the book of Revelation with the rest of the New Testa-

ment. We agree with Freed that Revelation 12:1-6 is important since symbolically the author links what has already come, i.e. the advent, with what is now happening and what is to come i.e. the *Parousia* all to gather in this text of the portent of the woman and the child[624].

The author uses the word σημειον to describe the woman and the child she was carrying:

Και σημειον μεγα ωψθη εν τω ουρανω (And a great sign appeared in heaven)[625]

The RSV translates the word σημειον to mean the portent. The translation is appropriate to a certain extent as it brings out the conception of a sign. However, portent is a stronger term than just a sign since it is best translated as a warning sign, an indication that something especially bad, shall happen in future. It is this that we are not comfortable with because this conception renders into the meaning of this term two undesirable notions namely that the woman and her child represent something evil or bad and second but proceeding from the first notion, that this something evil is something that is going to happen in future. In other words, it is a wholly eschatological event perhaps without a past and a present. We think that this narrows down the interpretation of a text that is otherwise pregnant with meaning.

We are satisfied with the translation of σημειον simply as sign with its full meaning of a miraculous sign, miracle or a sign, that by which something is known or distin-

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624   *Ibid.*
625   Translation is therefore ours.

guished, indication, mark or signal[626]. This removes emphasis on the two problematic notions we noted above. As σημειον, a number of scholars generally have taken the woman to denote either the Church or Mary the mother Jesus with almost all interpreters taking the child to denote Jesus Christ (We have not come across an interpretation to the contrary). However, most contemporary interpreters generally take the woman to represent the Jewish people from whom the Messiah came[627].

Both interpretations carry some weight. However, they lack the kind of emphases we are putting perhaps because those who came out with these interpretations did not have the kind of interests that we have, as we look at the text in question. In particular, we may recall that at the beginning of this chapter we outlined four disputes a discussion which in our view would provide the necessary link between the Old Testament and everything we have said and done up to this chapter on one hand, and what we say and do from this point on. One of the disputes concerns the popular conception that sees Jesus and the early Church as a continuation Old Testament prophets but standing apart from apocalypticism. We argued then that indeed Jesus and the early Church do continue from Old Testament prophets but contrary to the popular view, Jesus not only fulfils the apocalyptic prediction but in his person and mission he defines clearly and substantiates much more fully those predictions which he takes as pre-

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[626]   B.M. Newman, *A Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament* Stuttgart: German Bible Society, 1993. p. 162.

[627]   E.D. Freed, *Op. Cit.,* p. 364.

dictions about himself. This is the understanding that the early Church carried through and through. The author of Revelation adopts this conception and does much more with it to link the Old Testament, the rest of the New Testament and his own prophecy in particular. This schema of his comes out beautifully from the text under consideration.

We argue that in this text the author uses the woman as the symbol denoting the Jewish people from where the Messiah came. This is particularly appropriate as we consider the fact that the woman has a crown of twelve stars (the number twelve as usual symbolizing the full complement of the 12 tribes of Israel), but what is more important that the woman fled into the wilderness εις την ερημον and the word ερημον is important here as it makes immediate connections with crucial prophetic traditions, important of which are the Moses and the Exodus, Hosea and Gomer traditions in the Old Testament on one hand and also with crucial New Testament traditions particularly traditions about Jesus and his temptations (Matthew 3:1-3 and parallels) and traditions about John the Baptist and his ministry of preparing the way for the coming of the messiah (Matthew 4:1 ff and parallels) on the other hand.

The wilderness was a place prepared for the woman by God, where God would nourish her for 1260 days. It is crucial here that the number is a multiple of 12 and it is therefore symbolizing everything associated with Israel especially the New Israel that is the concern of the author. What is crucial is the immediate connection this has with the Exodus but more closely with the prophetic book of

Hosea and its tradition of alluring Israel into the wilderness where God would nourish her and show her abundant love in order for her to return to him. Thus, the author picks up the theme of the exodus and desert wanderings and broadens it to include the theme of the exile. Exile was necessary. God planned it so that through it Israel would see and experience God's love and mercy.

However, like the rest of the New Testament writers, the author of Revelation enriches this interpretation as he puts it within the context of the Christ-event and the subsequent genesis of the Church. For him the child, the messiah, is Jesus Christ and the woman is the new Israel, the Church. In this case the number 12 that frequently comes out in the author's symbolism represents the complete Church with the gentiles already grafted in to use Paul's terminology. This is the author's picture of the Church that comes out clearly from as early as chapter 7.

However, the woman also personifies suffering and perseverance both that ultimately bring salvation. So, the author continues with the earlier theme of suffering ensuing from the throne of God. The suffering is allowed so that as God eventually fights for and vindicates his faithful ones, those that obey his commandments and bear the testimony of Jesus Christ, his glory will be made manifest. The Church must seek comfort in that Christ the Lamb (discussed in detail in chapter 14) also experienced the same suffering as the lamb once slain but now lives as conqueror and victor. The Church too will conquer through the blood of the lamb and the testimony of their mouth, those that loved not their lives even unto death. The latter words remind us of Jesus' words in Matthew

16:24 ff. So, symbolically the author transcends the birth of Jesus. The birth pangs, as Freed notes, become symbolic of the suffering of the faithful[628]. The interpretation of the woman as the new Israel comes out somehow in 12:17 "...the rest of her offspring... those who keep the commandments of God and bear testimony to Jesus."

The picture is completed in chapter 14, which we consider after we make some important comments on chapter 13. In chapter 13 the author utilizes Daniel 7:4-7 to get into details of the beasts as agents of the dragon, who is Satan, here on earth. It also appears as if the author is reinterpreting Jeremiah 15:1-9 highlighting two of the four destroyers that through Jeremiah God said he would send to rebellious nations. The two destroyers are the sword and the beasts of the earth. The author carefully chooses these two so as to show that indeed the beast is attacking a religious target but the sword denotes that the nature of the attack is certainly political. In other words, the author is using here symbols to depict political crises for which plain language is inappropriate because of the level of danger involved.

Scholars have put forward a number of interpretations regarding the identity of the beast. Elsewhere we treat this as a subject of detailed analysis[629]. Here it suffices only to discuss the common views and even these we discuss briefly.

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[628]   *Ibid.*

[629]   See D. Bishau, "Theories On The Identity Of The Beast In Revelation 13" *Unpublished.*

When we discussed the date of writing of the book we discussed in some relative detail the suggestion that the beast represents Nero. So, we do not repeat this theory. Another common interpretation is derived from variations in the number denoting the beast that we find in the ancient manuscripts. For example, in the codex Ephraemi designated by the siglum C, the name of the beast is ἑξᾶ κοσιοι δεκα εξ and not εξακοσιοι εξηκοντα εξ (616 and not 666)[630]. If the name of the beast then is 616 then the common meaning of the beast has been that it refers to Gaius Caesar or Caesar God considering the Greek spelling of the name[631]. As we argued earlier, most scholars who belong to this school that looks at the meaning of the beast from its numerical name prefer Nero to any other figure because he best suits the context. However, we raised serious objections to this suggestion that we do not repeat at this point. What is important is that all these suggestions point to political figures who were each causing suffering on the faithful ones of God and this confirms our earlier suggestion that the Christians in the empire were persecuted for their refusal to bow down to emperor worship. We went further to suggest that this is however, not to be interpreted purely on religious grounds. As P.G.R. de Villiers argues, evil never functions on its own and isolated from other forms of evil[632]. We

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[630] K. Aland (et. al.) (Eds.), *The Greek New Testament* Stuttgart: Deutsche Biblegesellschaft, 1994. p. 862.

[631] E.D. Freed, *Op. Cit.*

[632] P.G.R. de Villiers, "Prime evil and its many faces in the Book of Revelation," in *Neotestamentica 34 (1)*, 2000.

strongly believe that whatever was the attack on the faithful and despite the change in the political leaders; the attacks were motivated by political reasons.

The link between the beast and political figures has not been limited to the period of the Roman Empire. Contemporary interpretations, especially among Pentecostal Churches and the Seventh Day Adventist Church, and as we discover later even among the Jehovah's Witnesses, are that the beast either denotes the United States of America or the Papacy or the United Nations or a combination of these bodies[633]. This group of interpreters links the Pope for example with the beast deriving this link from the Latin papal title *Vicarius Filii Dei* (meaning Representative of the Son of God)[634]. The school of thought, like its predecessors, derives its interpretation from the numerical value of the title thus: V = 5; I = 1; C = 100; A = 0; R = 0; U (v) = 5 and S = 0; sub-total = 112; F = 0; I = 1; L = 50; I = 1 and I = 1; sub-total = 53 and D = 500; E = 0 and I = 1; sub-total = 501. If we add 112 + 53 = + 501 we get 666 which is the name of the beast[635]. We do not think that this interpretation holds any water especially when we consider that the New Testament was written in Greek and any derivation of numerical values must necessarily

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[633] This is the popular view one gets from pamphlets published also by a number of the Pentecostal Ministries that include Paradise Ministries, Trumpet Ministries, Daily Manna Ministries, Idencho & Advent Hope Ministry and Maranatha Mission Ministries.

[634] This is found on one of the pamphlets entitled *Prophecy and World History* Markurdi (Nigeria): Daily Manna Ministries. (No date of publication and the pamphlet is not numbered)

[635] *Ibid.*

be done from the Greek terms themselves if we are to arrive at the author's intended meaning. What is interesting however is the immediate link the source makes between the Pope and the political leaders of the United States agreeing with our intuition that whatever was the attack on the faithful ones the attack had political motivations. We conclude that whatever theory we come up with concerning the meaning of the beast it is not complete unless it incorporates within it the meaning of the beast as a political figure or power. In all this symbolism the apocalyptic tenet of the vindication of the faithful comes out clearly.

The author continues with this theme in his discourse of the Seven Visions of the Lamb and the Angels in 14:1-20. We agree with Freed's observation that it would appear as if his discourse that brings about the theme above is a revisitation of the tradition of the remnant of the faithful that we find in the prophetic books like I Kings 19:18; Isaiah 4:2-6; 10:19-20)[636]. The faithful are the remnant as we argued before. They are to enjoy the bliss in heaven for their perseverance and remaining true to God and his Son[637].

It is interesting that the author sees Rome (Babylon or the Great City) as the enemy and is convinced that the city will fall. As Freed observes, the author uses the aorist tense (14:3) to anticipate what is to be described in chapter 18[638]. It is also interesting to note the author's venge-

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636   E.D. Freed, *Op. Cit.*

637   *Ibid.*

638   *Ibid.*

ful expression that he describes in terms of God's wrath[639]. This continues into chapters 15 and 16. The vengeful expressions come in the author's descriptions of fire and torment and these are contrasted with the descriptions of the joy in paradise. This quickly reminds us of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus as if the author was alluding to this teaching of Jesus.

Like is typical of the hyperbolic language of the prophets the author uses very strong language to warn his readers to remain faithful. As Freed correctly observes, in 14:14-20 the author shows heavy dependence on the Old Testament symbolism of harvest and vintage as he depicts God's judgment (see Isaiah 63:1-6; Hosea 6:11; Joel 3:2, 12-13)[640]. Thus, our paradigm of the importation of traditions from the past remains sustained.

We observe that while indeed the author was aware of the Old Testament prophets cited above, it is here that the author shows close connections with the Gospels especially Mark in his reference to the "one like the Son of man". It seems the author also imported the version of the harvest imagery from Jesus' teaching on the Kingdom of God, particularly as it comes out in Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43. It is here that the author displays his apocalyptic ideology and demonstrates the place of Jesus in his whole scheme. His message is continuous with Jesus' teaching of the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom is expressed both as a geographical realm constituted by its citizens and also as the reign of God ushered in by the Son of

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639   *Ibid.*
640   *Ibid.*

Man. The citizens are the faithful remnant. So, the uniting apocalyptic tenet of the vindication of the faithful continues and reaches a climax in this chapter. It is in this context that we buy Freed's argument that the author could have ended with this chapter[641] for in our view he had said much of what we think he wanted to say. It is not surprising that from this chapter onwards we come across repetitions, in different symbols though, of the final catastrophes upon the earth that result from God's wrath. While Freed's observation is valid that we indeed experience an anticlimax from here onwards, we take interest in the symbols that the author uses to depict these final catastrophes. Further, we take interest in how the author eventually brings together these symbols to point to Rome as the source of the faithful remnant's problems but maintaining a beautiful description of how they are going to be vindicated.

First we take interest in the Exodus typology that the author uses in much of chapters 15:1-16:21, which according to Freed mirrors Moses, the Israelites, and the plagues in Egypt (see Exodus 7:20-10:29 and compare with especially his description in 16:2-21). This vindicates the paradigm we suggested that traditions from the past are imported and appropriated to address the contemporary situation.

Also, the apocalyptic tenet of dualism continues as Rome, the "great city" code named Babylon is depicted as the beast and harlot and is contrasted with the Lamb and the bride i.e. the New Jerusalem, the faithful remnant.

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641   *Ibid.*

Again the depiction of cities as harlots is not new. The author must have utilized a past tradition from say, Isaiah 1:21 and Ezekiel 16:16 where Jerusalem is called a harlot and the whole of Israel is referred to as such in Hosea. Consistent with this Old Testament prophetic tradition the author interprets harlotry in terms of apostasy or unfaithfulness. The fall of the great city is going to be catastrophic, total annihilation of the beast and the harlot. This is contrasted with the joyful songs in heaven as the faithful remnant rejoices at the destruction of the beast and the harlot (19:9-10). The description becomes colourful, as symbolically there is marriage between the Lamb and the invited righteous[642].

The millenarianism of Revelation comes out clearly in the seven visions of the end of the aeon of Satan, and the final victory of Christ (19:11-22:5). This is where the Book of Revelation marks a point of departure from the rest of the New Testament apocalypticism. When the other New Testament authors deal with the *Parousia* they usually grapple with the question of the delay in the event. The author of Revelation deals with the event differently. He provides detail that we do not find elsewhere in the New Testament and it appears his concern is with describing the final victorious reign of the Lamb.

It seems there are going to be two phases of the resurrection, one at *Parousia* and a general resurrection after a millennium of Christ's reign. At *Parousia* Christ is going to appear and he will reign for 1000 years. Those who did not worship the beast or its image and those who died for

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642   *Ibid.,* p. 365.

their faith in Christ will be raised and they will reign with Christ (20:1-6). According to 20:2-3 Satan will be released from prison and will be thrown into the lake of fire (20:11-15) and then there will be a general resurrection of all people and the millenarian curtain will close with the final judgment of all people according to how they conducted themselves on earth. Again this is consistent with past traditions from say, Isaiah 4:3 and Daniel 7:10.

The author then describes his vision of the New Heaven and New Earth (21:1-8) again something that is not entirely new as Isaiah grapples with it in chapter 60:11-22 and chapters 65-66 of his book. God dwells with the faithful as prophets in the New Heaven and Earth. This magnificent description of God's new creation is concluded with a final note of hope and comfort to the faithful remnant (22:5). We are particularly concerned with a debate that ensued within the R.H. Gundry school of thought that interprets this last section, especially Revelation 21:1-22:5, dealing with the New Jerusalem as this debate helps us to summarise as it were the overall symbolic universe of the book of Revelation but what is more important for us, link this chapter and the next one in terms of the interpretation of the New Jerusalem by the Jehovah's Witnesses. For these reasons we deal with that debate as we summarise the message of Revelation and prepare ground for the discussions in the next chapter.

Gundry and others argue that the reality being described in 21:1-22:5 whatever its nature must be inter-

preted in symbolic terms whether concrete or abstract[643]. Following scholars like W.W. Reader, R.J. Mckelvey and others, this school agrees with the notion that the New Jerusalem symbolises the saints[644]. However, the school marks a point of departure in that for them the symbolic interpretation of the New Jerusalem has not been applied thoroughly and consistently to the details of John's description of the New Jerusalem before but what is more of an interest to us, it has not been tied very closely to the situation of the readers to whom John wrote the book of Revelation[645]. When applied thoroughly and consistently to the details of John's description the symbolic interpretation allows this school to infer that contrary to Jewish traditions of a renewal of Jerusalem and concerning a heavenly Jerusalem, John was not describing the eternal dwelling place of the saints, rather he was describing the saints and them alone[646]. Thus, building on the common notion from commentators that John Christianises the Jewish traditions mentioned above to describe the final abode for the saints, this school argues that John is not only Christianising those traditions but transforming Jerusalem into a symbol for the saints themselves. This is in agreement with our paradigm so far that traditions from the past are imported and transformed to address contemporary situations of deprivation.

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[643] R.H. Gundry, "The New Jerusalem As Place, Not Place For People." In *Novum Testamentum XXIX, 3.* (1987) p. 254.

[644] *Ibid.,* p. 255.

[645] *Ibid.*

[646] *Ibid.,* p. 256.

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The school draws evidence for their thesis from the letters to the seven churches confirming our intuition that these letters actually introduce the apocalypse proper. Also the school refers to earlier chapters especially chapters 7 and 13 showing that the New Jerusalem is a very large overall symbol to which small individual symbols contribute[647] and in our view the overall symbol uniting the whole book and giving it its key message that is tied closely to the overall function of the apocalyptic ideology of Revelation.

What this school does to tie the symbolism to the historical situation of the readers is of interest. Like us the school agrees that the community addressed by John was beginning to face the severity of persecution that the author knew would surely come[648]. True to our paradigm, to address this deprivation the author imported past traditions and transformed them into an apocalyptic ideology through which the Christian readers, as Gundry puts it, would see in the New Jerusalem, not their future dwelling place, but their future selves and state[649]. We get into further details of this discussion in the next chapter when we look at both the Jehovah's Witnesses' and the Johane Masowe's of interpretations of the New Jerusalem as the saints with the former referring to the Witnesses as the saints and the latter referring to a group of women, the sisters, led by mai Maggie Matanhire, as saints.

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[647] *Ibid.,* p. 255.
[648] *Ibid.,* p. 264.
[649] *Ibid.*

Scholars often refer to the rest of the book (22:6-21) as an epilogue part of which is often thought to be inauthentic to the author[650]. The section comprises a series of exhortations and warnings that are not new and therefore we do not get into details. The same theme to remain steadfast in the wake of suffering and to be encouraged by the imminent *Parousia* continues. The *Parousia* is coming so soon that the author is instructed not to seal his book (22:10). Thus, we see yet another apocalyptic trait and that is, imminence.

Therefore, in Revelation we see the basic tenets of apocalypticism which K. Koch summarised neatly namely first, the urgent expectation of the impending overthrow of all earthly conditions in the immediate future (imminence); second, the end appears as a vast catastrophe involving the universe (universalism); third, time is divided into segments and we add, events and even characters are seen as standing in apposition (dualism); and finally but what is more important, a new salvation lies beyond the catastrophe and is paradisal in character. The salvation is destined for the faithful remnant (vindication of the faithful) and this transition from disaster to final redemption takes place by means of an act issuing from the throne of God, hence the visibility of God's kingdom here on earth[651]. As a typical millenarian sect, the community of disciples around the prophet John developed this apoca-

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[650]   E.D. Freed, *Op. Cit.*

[651]   This summary of Koch's views comes from J.C. Beker, *Paul's Apocalyptic Gospel: the Triumph of God.* Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982. p. 136.

lyptic ideology to address the situation of deprivation mainly from the Domitian persecution and the language of millenarianism not only provided them with means of communication that was coded and therefore, understandable only to the closed circle of disciples that considered itself the chosen remnant of the faithful ones but also generated hope and perseverance among these disciples and this ensured the survival of the movement. Traditions from the past provided the disciples with inspiration and means to address the kind of deprivation that they faced.

CHAPTER 6: APPLICATION OF OUR PARADIGM AND CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR OF MILLENARIANISM IN AN ANALYSIS OF TWO CONTEMPORARY MILLENARIAN MOVEMENTS IN ZIMBABWE AND CONCLUSION

Preliminary Remarks and General Orientation of the Chapter

In this chapter we deal with two contemporary millenarian movements in Zimbabwe namely the Jehovah's witnesses and the Johane Masowe respectively in a bid to now test our paradigm and conceptual metaphor of millenarianism as a response to deprivation that we concretised and stated much more explicitly than before in the chapter immediately above. What we have established so far is that millenarian movements arise from within the context of deprivation. The paradigm is that a situation of deprivation arises that is contrary to a people's estimation of honour. A prophet leader arises who then formulates a vision that is build upon past prophetic traditions that are then metamorphosed and adapted to address the situation of deprivation. Further mutations of the vision and adaptations occur as the community of disciples around the prophet grows and adapts the vision to meet their own needs. As the situation of deprivation becomes more and more political the past traditions are transformed into coded language that is used and understood only by a faithful few. We intend to use this paradigm as a concep-

tual metaphor with which we are able to understand the selected two millenarian movements in Zimbabwe.

We do not concentrate much on the other features of the movements in question more than we do on their historical origins and subsequently their ideologies because it is from these two aspects of the movements that we are able to test our paradigm and conceptual metaphor of millenarianism. Our choice of these two movements is deliberate. We choose the two movements that are very different in terms of morphology and operation so as to take care of a number of specific variables that help us to penetrate some of the pertinent questions we raised earlier, especially in chapter one and to clarify major components of our point of departure.

In chapter one, we indicated our intention to concentrate on variables that are primarily explanatory variables implying that for us these are what we consider as the "causes" or "predictors" whose effects we are studying. Therefore, in this chapter we get into a detailed exploration of the enumerative and descriptive data on the two selected movements in a bid to arrive at associations between three primary explanatory variables implicit in our paradigm and conceptual metaphor namely:

a)   Biblical traditions from the past
b)   Millenarian beliefs or apocalyptic ideologies of the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Johane Masowe respectively, and
c)   Relative deprivation as the context within which these movements presumably originate.

Indeed, the mentioning of variables here begs the question whether or not there is any commonality, or

striking similarity, between these two movements. Exactly this is a major component of our thesis and basic rationale for analysing these two together in this chapter. Both the Johane Masowe and the Jehovah's witnesses have been studied before, and in some instances quite extensively, but there has never been a single study that we know of that sees striking similarities and therefore, genuine points of comparison between these two movements. The former movement is generally studied as a group among the so-called African Independent Churches, and interestingly none of the studies that we know of see the Johane Masowe as millenarian, while the latter is generally studied alone as a unique movement among the existing Christian organizations or sects.

As we state above the two movements differ in morphology and operation and in these two respects they are two very different movements. Following the general emphasis on outward form, the majority, if not all, of the scholars who studied the movements before have been blind to the kinds of striking similarities between the two particularly, in the contexts within which the two movements originated and therefore, the basic ideologies guiding each of the two movements and what they are doing to effect social change using their respective ideologies. As we state in chapter one, this is where we mark a point of departure. We do not shy away from studying the beliefs, faith and, or, doctrines of these movements because we think that such a study sharpens our penetrative fecundity. We also explore how the two movements have developed these doctrines or beliefs to respond to, or deal with, various stimuli of deprivation and these become our

dependent variables. In our analysis of the two movements we discuss some controlled variables key of which are the availability or non-availability of the Bible, and the presence or absence of a clearly identifiable leader, within the movement. We investigate whether or not these variables may be sources of variation.

The historical survey is meant to cover mostly the activities outside the country and the very early periods, of the movements. Much of what we say about the movements in Zimbabwe today we got from our respondents who were selected following the procedures and precautions outlined under the section on methodology in chapter one. We took samples mainly from Harare and Mutare to reduce transport costs but took enough care to ensure that the samples taken were as representative of the parent population as possible. We further divided the Johane Masowe in Mutare (Manicaland) into two cells, one cell being the Johane Masowe mainly concentrated around Zimunya Township whose main activities are in or around the city of Mutare, and the other cell being the Johane Masowe in Gandanzara, where the Johane Masowe main shrine is. Two interviewers, Joshua Mbeu and Christina Kwaramba were assigned to the Gandazara cell, while the writer concentrated on the Zimunya cell. Methodologically this was sound since the two cells indeed had and still have to a large extent the same socio-demographic characteristics as the parent population. With the Jehovah's Witnesses, it was easy to assume that each Witness interviewed represented fairly accurately the parent population because of their consistent teaching that borders on indoctrination and their desire to repre-

sent as accurately as possible the biblical teaching and structures.

Differences in morphology and operation are two controlled variables that we comment on in detail in our analysis. Interesting controlled variables are the treatment of the Bible and the question of leadership. The Jehovah's Witnesses are largely quite literate, while the opposite is true for the Johane Masowe. With the latter, it is interesting that not all of the Johane Masowe read the Bible. As we discuss later, the Johane Masowe VeChishanu do not read the Bible. It was difficult to assign enumerators for this cell and the writer teamed up with Matthew Engelke to investigate this particular group of the Johane Masowe largely through participant observation and snowballing.

There is a sense in which in our analysis we treat the latter variable as a confounded variable in that we propose without much discussion a new hypothesis that we borrow from Matthew Engelke, so that eventually this initially uncontrolled variable may become controlled. The other uncontrolled variables are specific to the Johane Masowe VeChishanu. As we pointed out in chapter one the Johane Masowe VeChishanu did not allow us to bring with us tape recorders and cameras and we had to depend on the power of our memory to remember as much as possible what had been said and done during the services at the Seke shrine. With the Jehovah's Witnesses we suspected that, as was the case with our questions concerning Joseph Booth and Kamwana, at times the Witnesses expressed ignorance of the existence and importance of certain persons perhaps because of the political history of

the persons involved. We think this could be another confounded variable whose effect on the results is uncertain.

We begin with the Jehovah's Witnesses not for any special reason except that it is easier to begin with them as there is some reasonable abundance of literature on them than there is literature on the Johane Masowe. Thus, it is easy to put in place and in advance potential points of analysis if we take the Jehovah's Witnesses as our starting point.

Historical Survey and Context of the Origins of the Jehovah's Witnesses

Scholars often make a distinction between The Jehovah's Witnesses Movement and the Watchtower Movements[652]. It is therefore necessary to spend some time discussing some nomenclature that may be useful for our purposes but that may be understood differently by various classes of audiences depending on how close and how well informed they are to the movement under study.

The terms Watchtower Bible Tract Society of Pennsylvania (WTBTS) and Jehovah's Witnesses respectively have been used to refer to the official WTBTS organization founded by Charles Taze Russell in Pennsylvania in 1884, the former term being the legal entity used by the Jehovah's Witnesses in the pursuit of their work of teaching

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[652] P. Pinto, "Jehovah's Witnesses in Colonial Mozambique" in *LFM Social Sciences & Missions No. 17 Dec. 2005*. p. 61. See also Bryan R. Wilson, "Jehovah's Witnesses in Kenya" in *Journal Of Religion In Africa. Vol. V, Fasc.2*. p. 8.

the Bible[653]. It has its headquarters in Brooklyn (USA) and branches in South Africa and Malawi[654]. During the 1870's Russell (1852-1916) who was a member of the Congregational Church, formed a Bible study group in Allegheny, Pennsylvania[655]. The main purpose of the Bible study group was to go back to the primitive Christianity founded by Jesus and followed by his disciples[656]. This group was thus known as the Bible students[657]. Russell began to put in writing his teachings and from 1879 onwards these were published in the magazine *Zion's Watchtower and Herald of Christ' Presence* and in 1881 the official name Watchtower Bible and Tract Society was derived from the name of this magazine[658].

Between 1886 and 1904 Russell published a six-volume piece of work, *Studies in the Scriptures,* which outlined the main doctrinal guidelines of the movement[659]. Under the leadership of Russell the group began to spread the doctrine of redemption of humankind through Jesus Christ's sacrifice throughout the world by means of tours, assemblies, pamphlets and speeches published in newspapers[660]. They attacked any Christian teaching that in their view lacked biblical support for instance, trinity and

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[653]   P. Pinto, *Op. Cit.* p. 61.

[654]   *Ibid.*

[655]   *Ibid.,* p. 62.

[656]   *Ibid.*

[657]   *Ibid.*

[658]   *Ibid.*

[659]   *Ibid.*

[660]   *Ibid.*

hell[661]. So, that the Bible is the fertile ground upon which the millenarian thrives goes back to the very roots of the Jehovah's Witnesses.

Some scholars have often distinguished between this organization and Watchtower movements, the latter being independent groups mainly based in Africa, drawing on personal interpretations of the literature produced by the WTBTS[662]. As we argue latter we have slight difficulty accepting this distinction. However at this point it is worth pointing out the grounds for the distinction. Scholars who make such a distinction argue that these independent Watchtower movements developed independently during the first half of the twentieth century and were never recognized officially by the WTBTS and in terms of their doctrines they differ in that the independent Watchtower movements merged the WTBTS teaching with other beliefs implying that they diverged from the orthodox position of the WTBTS[663]. The reasons for this were that geographically they were isolated from the mother body and thus they lacked the supervision of the mother body[664]. We do not find this to be any different from other church organizations with founding bodies in the United Kingdom or the United States or any other western country, there is no guarantee that doctrinally these churches have been consistent with and still maintain the official orthodox positions of their founders. We

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661   *Ibid.*
662   *Ibid.*
663   *Ibid.*
664   *Ibid.*

cannot even be sure that those in Africa that are under the direct supervision of the WTBTS do refrain from merging the teachings of the WTBTS and their traditional beliefs because it has been proven and indeed it is a valid assumption that any interpretation takes place in and is shaped by the socio-cultural and political environment of the interpreter[665].

However, our major objection to the distinction lies somewhere else. We state this objection later after we discuss the spreading of the Jehovah's Witnesses and their teachings in Southern Africa. For now it is important to note that all these movements are characterized by a distinctive millenarian trait, which in our view can be traced back to Russell and his initial Bible study group and that within the teaching and ideology of the WTBTS there was something that made an appeal to the oppressed or deprived devotees in Africa. The WTBTS was probably aware of this or probably had it as an agenda item but later because of open political confrontation began to use coded language and abandoned the groups that held openly that appealing political item. We demonstrate this point much more fully and in an elaborate and substantiated manner as we look at the historical origins and growth of the movement in Africa and Zimbabwe in particular, as this is our major focus. For now it suffices to mention that what perhaps appealed to the oppressed people of Africa who formed the Watchtower movements was deeply rooted in the millenarianism of Russell.

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[665] *Ibid.*

The Millenarianism of Russell and his Bible Study Group

Russell and his group made calculations based on events in the Bible and arrived at the conclusion that 1914 marks the end of the "seven times of the Gentiles" predicted in Luke 21:24 (cf. Daniel 4:10-17), when Christ would assume universal control.[666] This period would be characterized by what K. Koch calls worldwide havoc[667] that would lead to the destruction of all political institutions in the battle that is clearly described in Revelation as the battle of Armageddon. After this battle the millennium would commence in exactly a manner as it is described in Revelation, that is, the dead would be raised, the obedient remnant would reach perfection and Satan, his angels (demons) and the evil people would be destroyed[668]. This, as we discuss later is a key belief in the Jehovah's Witnesses. In our view this belief not only allows us to classify the Jehovah's Witnesses as millenarian but also as a radically political group.

However, this is a picture they have always been careful to guard themselves against as in their statements they declare that they are apolitical[669]. Most respondents maintained that Christians should keep out of politics, that is they must be separated from the world as we have it John 17:16 but should be careful to give due respect towards superior authorities as it is stated in Romans 13:1-7[670].

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[666]   P. Pinto, *Op. Cit.*

[667]   Cf. J.C. Beker, *Op. Cit.*

[668]   P. Pinto, *Op. Cit.*, p. 63.

[669]   *The Watchtower Vol. 115 No. 14 July 15*, 1994 p. 2.

[670]   For example, Tredah Mukombedzi, Pamela Timburwa, Nathan Timburwa and I. Mtetwa, all respondents from Mutare.

They argue that superior authorities at the time of Paul were human governments. However, in our view this is a view the Witnesses hold publicly but their practice shows that when the human governments violate what in their view is a biblical principle, they choose to follow the Bible and for them this is regarded as virtue and recommended courage[671]. Also they have a very peculiar use of the term enemy, which we comment on later in our analysis of the millenarian movements under study.

This implies that on the surface and from an impromptu analysis of what they say the Witnesses may appear as an apolitical group but upon close analysis their beliefs and practices reveal deep-seated political implications that perhaps come out explicitly in their actions. A close analysis of how the Jehovah's Witnesses movement came to Southern Africa perhaps helps clarify their political stance in a way that perhaps vindicates our observation and perhaps further strengthens our dispute regarding the distinction between the Jehovah's Witnesses Movement and the Watchtower movements that we mentioned briefly earlier, but what is more pertinent for our study, how the movement originated in Southern Africa is a useful path towards vindicating our paradigm and testing our conceptual metaphor.

The Jehovah's Witnesses Movement in Southern Africa
While we do this, we take particular note of the fact that as early as these formative years in Africa, the Jehovah's

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[671] See *2006 Year Book Of Jehovah's Witnesses* Rangeview, Krugersdrop: WTBTS, 2006. pp. 181, 182, 192 and 210.

Witnesses or Watchtower were and have always been viewed with suspicion by political leaders and have been persecuted at times. In fact, in the 1950's chief police officers and the civilian administration in Mozambique appropriated the understanding of the term "Watchtower" as a synonym of rebellion and the term had been used as such in neighbouring countries by British authorities in the then Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) in preceding decades[672]. Whether this was justifiable or not is not the issue at the moment, but that the political authorities in all these countries were wary of the presence of the Witnesses implies that there is something about their doctrine or beliefs and, or, practices that was interpreted by the authorities as political. Precisely this is what we seek to expose in our analysis.

In Africa, particularly Southern Africa, WTBTS beliefs are believed to have come through an Australian protestant missionary by the name Joseph Booth[673]. Booth was quite opposed to the partitioning of Africa by powerful European nations and advocated for the ideology of Africa for the African, which he articulated in his book Africa for the African that he published in 1896[674]. His basic message was that Africans should unite and work for their own political, economic and spiritual development[675]. Exactly what was his motivation and driving force for such a

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[672] P. Pinto, *Op. Cit.*

[673] *Ibid.,* p. 64.

[674] *Ibid.*

[675] *Ibid.*

campaign nobody knows, but interesting was his vision of an African Christian nation that would be formed through united effort and hastened by prayer; God would form this nation through power and action ensuing from his throne at his own time and way[676]. Although he discouraged violence to achieve independence Booth was known as a critic of the establishment and because of this he lost favour of British colonial authorities and subsequently the support of the mainstream churches that he previously associated himself with[677].

After having been rejected by several religious organizations Booth is said to have gone to the United States of America (USA) in 1906 and convinced Russell the president of the WTBTS to appoint him as the WTBTS representative in Sub-Saharan Africa[678]. It is from this appointment that we refuse to accept the distinction that some scholars and the WTBTS itself try to make between the official Jehovah's Witnesses movement and the various Watchtower groups that developed in Africa from the efforts of Booth. If Russell appointed Booth and he indeed worked as an official representative of the WTBTS it is not fair to disown the fruits of his missionary activities especially professing ignorance of such activities and results. It is interesting that all the respondents we interviewed did not even know Booth despite the fact that he is the only logical explanation of the presence of Witnesses in Southern Africa and Zimbabwe in particular. While the

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[676] *Ibid.*

[677] *Ibid.*, p. 65.

[678] *Ibid.*

ignorance can be explained in that the Witnesses do not pay particular homage to human founders and try to refrain as much as possible from some kind of leadership hierarchy and social stratification, it is incomprehensible that most Witnesses or Publishers as they are called, particularly the senior ones, expressed ignorance of a man who is prized with the spreading of the WTBTS beliefs and teachings in Southern Africa. It is possible that the Witnesses try by all means not to mention his name because of his political ideology and the general thrust of his mission and how this ended up putting him and the WTBTS in bad light in the eyes of the establishment. It is also probably for this reason that they disowned and, or, abandoned the groups that emerged from his efforts.

We argue that this was perhaps a clear case of a marriage of convenience, and indeed politics makes strange bed fellows, where the WTBTS found in Booth a man who could easily and quickly spread their teachings in Africa, a virgin territory for the Society, while Booth found in the WTBTS an organization that would give him material and moral support while he was going ahead with propagating his ideology of Africa for the African. Another possibility is that originally the WTBTS had a political agenda that they also wanted to spread and found in Booth the rightful person who could do that (for can two walk together unless they are in a covenant) but later however, they could not stand the heat coming from the response of the political authorities in the regions Booth ministered and so they abandoned him and his followers. Whatever was the case, the exploits of Booth are worth tracing because as we argued before he is the only logical

explanation to the historical origins of the Jehovah's Witnesses movement in Southern Africa and Zimbabwe in particular.

Booth began his work from Cape Town (it is worth noting that to date the WTBTS as one respondent stated, has its regional offices in South Africa and Malawi) spreading the teachings of the WTBTS in Malawi, then Rhodesia Nyasaland through the official Watchtower magazine[679]. The flux of workers into South African mines quickened the spreading of the WTBTS beliefs and teachings both in South Africa and Malawi[680]. The converted workers began to form small groups of believers and on their way would also spread the WTBTS doctrine and this way the believers multiplied.

Booth is said to have appointed Elliot Kamwana an Africa native as his operations executive in the field and through Kamwana's efforts there were massive baptisms[681]. We surmise that the apocalyptic prediction of the coming of the new aeon in 1914 and 1914 as the year of the millennium was particularly attractive and is believed to have accounted for these massive conversions. Booth adopted Russell's millenarian view that was perhaps conceptualised by Kamwana and for him 1914 would be the year of the millennium when Christ would come (probably to establish the Christian African nation) to reign and with his reign all Whites would leave the country, putting

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[679] *Ibid.*

[680] *Ibid.*

[681] *Ibid.*

an end to the oppressive system of taxes[682]. It is interesting to note that for Kamwana Booth's ideology was liberating and when the Witnesses talked of enemies the enemies were, in the context of Kamwana and his fellow black mine workers, the white oppressors. Even though the Witnesses may deny it, and even though this may not have been Booth's intention, the African converts took the teachings of the WTBTS, as ideological tools to fight oppression and the teachings were primarily attractive for this reason. Therefore, in this context we may conclude, and justifiably so, that the African genesis of the Watchtower movements can be discerned as a radical response to oppression or deprivation arising from taxation by the white oppressors.

Unfortunately the British authorities arrested Kamwana in 1910 in Nyasaland (Malawi) and his preaching ended abruptly then[683]. Meanwhile Booth's religious inclinations turned towards the Seventh Day Adventists between 1909 and 1910 and the Watchtower churches disintegrated into small groups with some remaining faithful to WTBTS orthodoxy than the others[684]. However, the preaching of the two men had a lot of impact on the followers who continued to preach and these followers were eventually known as preachers of "new things"[685].

The spreading of the WTBTS teachings did not end with Kamwana's efforts. The other disciple of Booth was

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[682]   *Ibid.*

[683]   *Ibid.*

[684]   *Ibid.*, p. 66.

[685]   *Ibid.*

another African native from the Chiradzulu District in Nyasaland named John Chilembwe[686]. It is from an analysis of Chilembwe's activities that our argument that the political connotations within the teachings of the WTBTS, especially the millenarian teaching of a new aeon whose final consummation would be in 1914, gave rise, and was a key motivation, to the genesis of the Jehovah's Witnesses movement in Southern Africa. In 1901 Chilembwe is said to have created the Providence Mission of Nyasaland[687], which although motivated by religious concerns initially, later turned out to be a political movement. In 1911 on the 6th of February, he illegally crossed the boarder of Mozambique in order to preach to the natives there but probably because of his criticism of the Mozambican authorities he was deported from the country[688]. In 1915 Chilembwe unsuccessfully organized a proto-nationalist revolt against the British in Nyasaland and was killed on the 3rd of February that year while trying to escape into Mozambique[689]. The fact that he organized these revolts while preaching and spreading the WTBTS doctrine suggests that he found inspiration and guidance from these teachings and doctrine.

Even though there was no longer any discernable leader, nor was there any unified or fixed leadership structure, Watchtower movements with or without connection first, with the parent body in USA and second, among

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[686]   *Ibid.,* p. 67.
[687]   *Ibid.*
[688]   *Ibid.*
[689]   *Ibid.*

them, continued to form. Perhaps the uniting factor was a common doctrinal, theological or ideological content that was used to deal with the common situation of deprivation particularly in the form of the oppressive system of taxation.

By the 1950's authorities used the term Watchtower to refer without distinction to both the Jehovah's Witnesses and these Watchtower movements that emerged from Booth and his African native "executive" field officers[690]. Probably because of the political activities associated with these other movements, the WTBTS saw it necessary to clarify their position and to distinguish themselves from these other movements. In 1948 they published a leaflet entitled The Watchtower Story in which the WTBTS gave its own side of the story and their official position is that the term Jehovah's Witnesses be reserved for the Bible Students who accepted the supervision of the WTBTS[691]. Of course, the publication of the leaflet was followed by a long process of screening those movements that did not fall under the supervision of the WTBTS that are often accused of distorting its teaching and beliefs[692]. We are not sure whether this screening indeed was not a cleansing ritual by the WTBTS aimed at exonerating itself from the political time bomb created from an interpretation of its teachings and thus, a process of redressing a potential explosive situation should the movements in Africa have been allowed to thrive.

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[690]   *Ibid.,* p. 68.
[691]   *Ibid.*
[692]   *Ibid.*

It is not immediately clear how the Jehovah's Witnesses came to Zimbabwe. Most of our respondents remembered, and perhaps felt indebted to, those that witnessed to them, and had no particular interest into the history of the movement. Most respondents expressed ignorance of either Joseph Booth or Kamwana or Chilembwe. However, we surmise that the WTBTS beliefs probably filtered into Zimbabwe through the activities of Kamwana and Chilembwe as chief disciples of Booth. It is most unlikely that the two gentlemen would get into and out of Mozambique spreading the Watchtower gospel ignoring the neighbouring Zimbabwe (then Southern Rhodesia). Further, the influence of Kamwana and the resultant Kitawala movements in Malawi would not have been felt in Kenya without being felt in neighbouring Rhodesia. The exodus of mine workers from Malawi (then Northern Rhodesia or Rhodesia Nyasaland) into Zimbabwe was probably a key factor influencing the spread of the WTBTS beliefs.

It is most unlikely that such literate devotees of the WTBTS beliefs would fail to know the key figures who were instrumental in spreading their gospel since even to date each witness or publisher, as they are known, keeps a record of hours one would have spent spreading the word for that year and as we state later this is crucial as a determining criterion for appointment into the committee of elders and ministerial servants. These records are compiled and published in the Jehovah's Witnesses Yearbook for that particular year. There are probably some real reasons why they do not want the movement to be associated with these names. It is most likely that this an aftermath

of efforts to weed out movements that the WTBTS claimed were misrepresenting its beliefs and mission. Booth had a particular African agenda, which was embraced quickly by his African disciples very much to the dislike of the colonial powers in the respective countries where the disciples resided and ministered. This resulted in a dangerous political label being attached onto the Watchtower movement as we discussed earlier. Part of redressing this was for the movement to dissociate itself from these figures and resulting Watchtower "dissident" groups. Although scanty there is evidence that the Kitawala movements started by, or associated with, Kamwana were opposed by the authorities and the WTBTS was particularly careful not to associate itself with such movements.[693] Whether or not this is the reason why the Jehovah's Witnesses in Zimbabwe express their ignorance of the names Booth and Kamwana, is not certain. We decide to treat this as a confounded variable that does have very little effect on our conclusions because the question that guides our conclusions can still be asked whether or not the Witnesses associate themselves with these personalities.

We surmise that as with all millenarian sects the Jehovah's Witnesses movement in Southern Africa and Zimbabwe in particular, arose in a context of deprivation arising largely from, as was the case in Malawi, South Africa and Zambia then, an oppressive system of taxation which both the Shona and Ndebele struggled with for a long

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693   B. R. Wilson, "Jehovah's Witnesses in Kenya" in *Journal of Religion in Africa Vol. V, fasc. 2.* p. 9.

time. It is not our intention to offer a detailed survey of the system of taxation in colonial Zimbabwe. We note only a few examples that help demonstrate the strong dissatisfaction and dislike of this system stretching from the earliest attempts at collecting tax to the second Chimurenga.

We pick on the Hwesa of Katerere because other Shona groups were affected by other factors of deprivation that influenced them to join arms in the liberation struggle whereas the Hwesa were mainly influenced by taxation. Our selection thus provides us with a control experiment as it were. One of the early attempts to collect hut tax was from among the Katerere people of Mtoko in 1898[694]. Taxation was already being experienced among other Shona groups when the Hwesa of Katerere were enjoying relative peace and quiet. The other Shona groups were experiencing forced labour, company stock raiding and taxation and these forced them to wage the first Chimurenga of 1896[695]. However, evidence has it that taxation later became serious source of deprivation even among the Hwesa people as hut tax compelled adult males to become migrant labourers in a bid to earn the necessary income for its payment[696]. As the oppressive system intensified chiefs and headmen became tax collectors and labourer recruiters[697]. To show that tax was a ma-

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[694] D. Maxwell, *Christians And Chiefs In Zimbabwe A Social History Of The Hwesa People c. 1870s-1990s* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999. p. 17.

[695] *Ibid.,* p. 32.

[696] *Ibid.,* p. 36.

[697] *Ibid.,* p. 37.

jor source of deprivation there were strategies of tax evasion that were devised and native commissioners noted this as a major concern[698]. One interesting point to note is that even during the second Chimurenga the guerrillas would have found the Hwesa difficult to mobilise since for a long time they had never faced any eviction from their homes and no forced labour, had it not been their tax grievances against the white people[699]. So, tax was a major cause of deprivation that united the Shona groups to form a liberation movement and this was even verbalised in a liberation song, Sendekera some of whose words read: "...*umba, kamunda kane matombo ndinoterera...*" (I pay tax for my hut and rocky piece of land).

This removed from the Shona and Ndebele their estimation of honour. The conditions were ripe for the formation of a millenarian sect. As we argued earlier the need for a leader with a vision and one who would articulate the crisis of deprivation was met in the form of Joseph Booth with his vision of Africa for the African. However, being white himself, he would not have gone very far had it not been for the community of disciples that surrounded him in the likes of Kamwana and company. Booth picked up traditions from the past already transformed in Russell's millenarianism and appropriated them to address the African context. Kamwana picked up Booth's vision and found the teaching especially from Revelation appropriate to create a new Africa free from tax. This would certainly be very appealing to the Shona

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698   *Ibid.,* p. 44.
699   *Ibid.,* p. 124.

and Ndebele who for a long time had been fighting the oppressive system of tax.

Because of the fate of these founding figures at the hands of both British and Portuguese authorities the development of apocalyptic language that is highly symbolic and coded was inevitable. That our intuition here is probably sound is vindicated by the fact that during the early stage of the Chimurenga armed struggle the Jehovah's Witnesses made a prediction that in heaven there were only three drums of rain remaining and a lot of people who did not understand this coded language branded them liars. A number of senior publishers we interviewed on this matter concurred that this was coded language referring to the impending war of liberation that was about to be much more open than before. This was in 1972 and the armed struggle became much more open especially in Manicaland around 1975.

This may be debatable but what we cannot deny is that in terms of social organisation the Jehovah's Witnesses suit the description of a millenarian sect, which we outlined in an earlier chapter. For example, they are typically egalitarian and this social structure is informed and governed by their apocalyptic ideology. Briefly we look at their social organisation and spent a little bit of some time looking at their apocalyptic ideology.

The Jehovah's Witnesses and their Social Organisation

In terms of social organisation the Jehovah's Witnesses say they have no particular leadership hierarchy. However, on the ground they talk of a president of the organisation, the first one being Russell. When he died in 1916,

Joseph F. Rutherford succeeded him the following year[700]. Rutherford introduced many changes that included the publishing of a sister magazine The Golden Age, that at present is called Awake! The former name is interesting as it captures and perpetuates Russell's Millenarian dream. Apart from that Rutherford placed emphasis on door-to-door witnessing, which to date is the main witnessing method of the Jehovah's Witnesses.

Most respondents and indeed the literature especially the Jehovah's Witnesses Year Book published yearly, talk of a Governing Body that according to the respondents is constituted by seven people. We think that the number seven was not arrived at by accident but something that was well thought out and drawn from the Bible. The importance of the number seven in the book of Revelation, which the Witnesses refer to regularly, must have been a factor influencing the choice in the constitution of the Governing Body. Consistent with the belief that during the millennium the faithful remnant shall be given the opportunity of being led to perfection, the number seven symbolises exactly that. It symbolises, as we noted earlier, perfection and completeness, but as we noted also, it symbolises victory. All these are concepts that the Witnesses must have thought out as they determined the number.

When asked whether these seven should be regarded as the leaders of the organisation, most respondents said no. According to them these are people who are consulted

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700 *Jehovah's Witnesses Who Are They? What Do They Believe?* Watchtower Bible Tract Society of Pennsylvania, 2000. p. 7.

and are there to make things function and to coordinate the activities of the movement. According to a Mrs Mutetwa, one of the publishers we talked to, these are people who are not above the others neither are they accorded special places in the congregation nor do they put on regalia that distinguish them from the others and that symbolize their authority. Of course, there is a president of the organization but once again he is not above the others. He is there as a figure who represents the organization and coordinates the activities of the Governing Body. In a way, they try as much as possible to create an egalitarian community where every member is seen as equal before God. As we argued in chapter two this is exactly how the Israelite prophetic movement as a millenarian sect began and egalitarianism is a typical characteristic of a movement borne out of a radical response to deprivation. This Body controls worldwide activities of the movement. So in a way it is the governing structure at an international level situated at the headquarters in Pennsylvania.

When Rutherford died in 1942, the successor in presidency, N.H. Knorr, recommended that the Governing Body be enlarged and in 1976, before his death the following year, Knorr implemented this recommendation. Administrative responsibilities were divided up and assigned to various committees comprising members of the Governing Body with many years of experience as ministers[701]. These committees can be regarded as departments comprising volunteers who join the Governing Body to

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[701] *Ibid.,* p. 9.

offer services depending on their expertise[702]. Some specialize specifically with research and publications and others printing. These two are the core business of the Body, but because the volunteers have some personal needs that have to be met, other departments become inevitable, for instance, laundry, farming and many areas of expertise one can think off. Also during his early years as President, Knorr introduced a concerted programme of training that saw the development of a special training school for missionaries called The Watchtower Bible School of Gilead[703]. The needs of these trainee missionaries are met also through the Departments. The idea is to make the organization self-sufficient. There is nobody or anything that is hired from outside unless there is something so strictly technical and highly specialized that that the volunteers there already have fallen short of such expertise. The Governing Body has over 100 branches throughout the world[704] in more than 230 lands, regions or areas. Each branch has a Branch Committee comprising three to seven members whose responsibility is to oversee the work in the land, region, country or area under its jurisdiction, and every year the Governing Body sends representatives to the branches to confer with these

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[702] *Mwari Anodei Kwatiri?* Watchtower Bible Tract Society of Pennsylvania, 1996, p. 29. (Translation to English is mine).

[703] *Jehovah's Witnesses Who Are They? What Do They Believe?* Watchtower Bible Tract Society of Pennsylvania, 2000. p. 8.

[704] *Ibid.,* p. 9. See also *Mwari Anodei Kwatiri?* Watchtower Bible Tract Society of Pennsylvania, 1996, p. 29. (Again translation to English is mine).

branch representatives[705]. The branch offices can be regarded as the regional offices.

The area, region or country served by each branch is divided into districts and the districts are further divided into circuits with each circuit comprising about 20 congregations[706]. The branch representatives confer with the district overseers who oversee the work of the circuits[707]. There is a circuit overseer who oversees the work of the congregations in his[708]circuit. The circuit overseer visits the congregations in his circuit usually twice a year helping the Witnesses to organize and do the work of preaching in the area assigned to the congregation concerned[709].

The local congregation is the centre of activity in that the good news about the Kingdom is disseminated from there in the area assigned to that congregation. The area assigned to the congregation is mapped out in small territories that are each assigned to an individual Witness whose task is to visit and speak with the people in each home therein[710]. The sizes of the congregations range from very few witnesses to as large as 200 strong congregations and within each congregation are elders who look

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705 *Jehovah's Witnesses Who Are They? What Do They Believe?* Watchtower Bible Tract Society of Pennsylvania, 2000. p. 25.

706 *Ibid.*

707 *Ibid.*

708 I was not sure whether there were female overseers because all respondents interviewed and all the sources consulted talked in terms of male overseers.

709 *Jehovah's Witnesses Who Are They? What Do They Believe?* Watchtower Bible Tract Society of Pennsylvania, 2000. p. 25.

710 *Ibid.*

after various duties[711]. The most important person among the witnesses is the individual proclaimer of the good news, that is, the witnesses value a lot the field work of personally telling others about God's kingdom and this is one thing every witness, whether serving at the headquarters or in branches or in circuits does. As we stated earlier a record of hours one spends on this work is kept and reports of the work eventually reach the headquarters and are eventually published in two important publications namely the annual Yearbook and the January 1 issue of The Watchtower.

At the branch offices in Zimbabwe, according to Mr. Timburwa, the Branch Committee representatives are organized into a community that is called the Bethel Family and the branch offices are referred to as Bethel. The committee at Bethel functions pretty much the same way as the committees at the various levels of the movement's hierarchy. The Committee however coordinates activities at national level, that is, it operates in Zimbabwe. Just like at international level, there are Departments at Bethel comprising volunteers who likewise, offer for free their services depending on their expertise.

Just like at any level within the hierarchy of the movement, at congregational level there is no particular leader. The committee of elders we mentioned earlier coordinates activities at that level. However, unlike the community at national and international levels respectively, at congregational level the number that makes up the committee is not fixed. The ministerial servants assist the eld-

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[711]   *Ibid.*

ers. The governing body appoints both the elders and the ministerial servants.

As we discussed earlier each member has a record of hours that one would have dedicated to witnessing[712]. This is done to measure individual progress and this individual progress is a major criterion for appointment into the committee of elders. Once again there is no specific number of ministerial servants. The ministerial servants are grouped into departments depending on their areas of expertise. In these departments they look into the needs of the congregations and this implies that the needs of the congregations are supplied from Bethel. Asked why the name of the national headquarters is Bethel, most respondents did not know. One simply said it is biblical. The elders and ministerial servants lead in Bible study. To do this they receive some kind of training but this is very short. Real training takes place during the time when one is prepared to become a publisher.

An interesting aspect is how the Witnesses give. There are no membership fees nor is there any equivalent of Sunday offering. The Witnesses base their teaching on offerings and membership fees on Matthew 10:8[713]. Since the believers receive salvation without pay, likewise they must give without pay. However, asked how they build their Kingdom Halls and support the ministry, Mr. Timburwa said volunteers build Kingdom Halls and this is

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[712] *Ibid.* (Also see a copy of the *2006 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses.* pp. 31-38 with details of the 2005 Year Service Report from 112 Branches and 235 Lands with a total of 98 269 congregations).

[713] *Mwari Anodei Kwatiri?* Watchtower Bible Tract Society of Pennsylvania, 1996, p. 28.

confirmed by one of the Watchtower Bible Tracts[714]. He also said that within each congregation there are three boxes where contributions are placed. One is for world-wide needs. The second one is for building and the last one is for everyday running expenses. The believers give at their own will and the contributions are not counted nor is it possible to know how much a believer would have contributed. The Witnesses base this practice of free will offering that is placed in a box on II Corinthians 9:7. There is no treasurer. Once the monies are collected the collections are sent to their respective destinations depending on which box they were put. The theology here is based on a saying of Jesus that whenever we give the right hand should not know what the left hand has given. It is interesting that there has never been a time when the electricity and water have been cut by the civil authorities due to non-or late payment. This speaks a lot of volumes on the kind of honesty that exists among the Jehovah's Witnesses and the kind of doctrine or teaching that generates such honesty. As we argue later, a lot has to do with their key apocalyptic belief that 1914 marked a very important period in the establishment of the World Government and Jesus is now on the throne, the end of the current reign of the gentiles is soon after which the millennium will ensue and God during the millennium will perfect and reward the faithful remnant. The majority of the Witnesses we talked to think we are in that era of the millennium and God is already perfecting the remnant (the Witnesses) so that they would qualify to enter the

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[714]   *Ibid.*

Kingdom and rule with Jesus Christ. So, honesty and faithfulness are cultivated doctrinally.

Each congregation meets at the Kingdom Hall, a simple building without symbols or drawings even the cross is noticeably absent in these buildings, for the Witnesses argue that putting symbols and drawings in the building is tantamount to idolatry[715]. At the Kingdom Hall the congregation meets three times a week. As we stated earlier there is Committee of elders who, inter alia, lead in Bible Study and ministerial servants assist them. This leadership structure is based on I Timothy 3:1-10, 12, 13; 5:17. The Witnesses stress that these elders and ministerial servants must not be honoured neither should they put on clothing that distinguish them from the rest of the Witnesses nor should they be given positions or titles of honour as if they are being revered. This teaching is based on II Corinthians 1:24 and Matthew 23:8-10. These elders and ministerial servants can lead and conduct funeral rituals and Nyaradzo (a Shona equivalent ritual of the Memorial Service) and they base this on James 5:14-16 and I Peter 5:2, 3. Apart from meeting at the Kingdom Hall, every year the Jehovah's Witnesses also attend International Conventions where the Bible is taught and new converts are baptised as instructed in Matthew 3:13-17; 28:19, 20[716].

However, our main focus is not on the social organisation of the Jehovah's Witnesses. As early as chapter one we registered our displeasure in focusing on what we

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[715] *Ibid.*

[716] *Ibid.*

called the external form of these movements and our reason was clear that it makes us lose sight of many other important items that hold together and keep the movements going. For this reason we turn on to the basic teachings or beliefs of the Jehovah's Witnesses and what it is exactly that builds, holds together and keeps the movement going.

The basic Beliefs of the Jehovah's Witnesses
Indeed we have referred to some of these beliefs in passing especially in our brief historical survey of the origins of the movement, but that was for purposes of clarifying certain aspects of the history. Here we now attempt a systematic presentation of the beliefs but with a bias towards a reconstruction of what we think is the basic ideology guiding the movement in its attempts to respond to deprivation. To be more systematic we would have wanted to distinguish between first, the Witnesses' Numinological beliefs, that is, their beliefs in God or what they consider to be their ultimate reality and here outline also the essential elements of their Christology; second, their Anthropological beliefs, that is, their beliefs in the self and what they consider to be the human condition or the fundamental human problem requiring salvation; and finally, their Soteriological beliefs, that is, their beliefs concerning salvation. However, we are cognizant of the fact that these categories may be artificial in that the Witnesses themselves do not recognize them and that there are beliefs among the Witnesses that may not exactly fit into the categories but what is more crucial to us, we are only interested at this stage in only those apocalyptic tenets that

in our view are evidence of a clear response to deprivation on the part of the Jehovah's Witnesses.

The Jehovah's Witnesses believe in Almighty God whom they call Jehovah[717]. The Witnesses are aware that Jehovah is God's personal name and they prefer to call this creator of the universe (Psalm 83:18; Isaiah 42:8; 43:10, 11) using that personal name which appears in the original Hebrew Scriptures 7 000 times[718]. In fact, it is from this that the Jehovah's Witnesses draw their name. They consider themselves true witnesses, as was Jesus Christ, of Jehovah (Hebrews 12:1; John 18:37; Revelation 3:14; Acts 1:8)[719]. They are right in the footsteps of the commission of Jesus and the early Christians, to be true witnesses of Jehovah. Jehovah is the supremely intelligent and powerful creator of the universe and the universe declares the glory of Jehovah (Romans 1:20; Psalm 19:1-4)720. Jehovah made the earth for a purpose (Proverbs 16:4) and the purpose is as he declares in Genesis 1:28[721]. However, the first human pair became disobedient and failed to fill the earth with righteous families who would lovingly care for the earth with its plants and animals[722]. But their failure does not mean that Jehovah's purpose failed because a thousand years later in the words of the prophet Isaiah declared the same purpose (Isaiah 45:18;

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[717] *Jehovah's Witnesses Who Are They? What Do They Believe?* Watchtower Bible Tract Society of Pennsylvania, 2000. p. 12.

[718] *Ibid.,* p. 4.

[719] *Ibid.,* p. 5

[720] *Ibid.,* p. 12.

[721] *Ibid.*

[722] *Ibid.*

see also Ecclesiastes 1:4)[723]. This purpose will be realized (Isaiah 46:10).

Hence, the Witnesses believe that the earth will remain forever and that all people, living and dead, who fit in Jehovah's purpose for a beautified, inhabited earth, may live on it forever[724]. Hence, the Jehovah's Witnesses have serious problems with suggestions that the earth shall be destroyed and that some people shall go to heaven abandoning the earth and understandably therefore, their understanding of the Lord's Prayer emphasizes the words "Let thy Kingdom come" and "Let thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven". Each time some Witnesses introduced their lessons (the researcher had quite a number of lessons with many Witnesses in Harare and Mutare and some became personal friends) the Lord's Prayer was a permanent feature and almost always the first question introducing any discussion was how we viewed the current harsh socio-political and economic conditions in Zimbabwe. This emphasis was evident.

Therefore, from this perspective we argue that if one needs to understand the rest of the teachings of the Jehovah's Witnesses this belief on Jehovah's purpose is key. All their other beliefs revolve around and indeed make sense from the perspective of this belief about what they perceive as Jehovah's purpose of creating the earth. While other books of the Bible are key, the Jehovah's Witnesses mainly draw this insight from the book of Revelation, which they interpret regularly during the lessons.

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[723]   *Ibid.*
[724]   *Ibid.*

Consistent with Gundry's suggestion the Witnesses note that when the book of Revelation mentions the New Heaven and the New Earth in 21:1-22:5 the latter is only mentioned but not described[725]. What is described in detail is the New Jerusalem coming out of the New Heaven and descending on the New Earth. Thus, the New Jerusalem is to be perceived as personal rather than as topographical, i.e. as we argued earlier it symbolises the saints who are the Jehovah's Witnesses themselves. Revelation 3:12 is taken to identify the New Jerusalem with the person who overcomes. The dualism of Revelation attracts the Witnesses as they take themselves to be the children of light suffering now at the hands of the beast (these are political authorities in various places and levels. However, the key to understanding all this and the major belief that provides internal logic to the millenarianism of the Jehovah's Witnesses is their belief about the events in the crucial year 1914 and the inauguration of God's Government. This is a subject that requires a whole debate on its own. We only provide a few relevant details. This is what also provides the key to their understanding of Christ and the internal logic of their Christology.

Referring specifically to the prophecy of Daniel and that of John in Revelation the Witnesses maintain a belief in God's World Government that has already been inaugurated and in a typical apocalyptic fashion is growing unnoticed since 1914. Unseen to human eyes, up in the holy heavens, a mighty government was brought forth by the Creator of heaven and the earth to work for the lasting

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[725]   R.H. Gundry *Op. Cit.,* p. 256.

peace of humankind[726]. In 1914, the "times of the Gen-
tiles" for world domination by Gentile world powers with-
out interference from God's kingdom ended[727]. World
War 1 destroyed kingdoms and no new kingdom was
formed despite human efforts to do so through such bod-
ies like the United Nations. Through Jesus Christ, the
true heir of David and Jehovah's Chief Agent in World
Government as prophesied in Daniel and Revelation in-
augurated the Messianic kingdom that came forth from
the womb of Jehovah's wife like organisation true to
John's words in Revelation 12:5. As David's royal heir he
has already begun to rightfully apply to God for kingdom
rule[728]. The Witnesses say much more but it is interesting
to note that the wife like organisation are the faithful Wit-
nesses themselves who since then have already begun
suffering persecution. They are the "saints", the "holy
ones"[729]. Their interpretation of Daniel 7:8 is interesting
in this regard. The combination of Britain and the United
States of America during World War 1 is regarded as the
"small" horn that plucked up three other horns (Spanish,
Dutch and French naval powers)[730]. During this war a
number of Bible Students now known as the Jehovah's
Witnesses were persecuted and some were imprisoned to
many years in prison on June 21 1918 in Atlanta Geor-

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726   "God's Chief Agent In The World Government," in *The Watchtower
      Library On CD*.
727   *Ibid.*
728   *Ibid.*
729   *Ibid.*
730   *Ibid.*

gia[731]. So, even when we look at the history of the movement at an international scale we see the movement arising from a context of deprivation and using apocalyptic visions built from past prophetic traditions to understand itself the movement has managed to survive the harsh conditions of deprivation.

The prophecy of the New Jerusalem and the New Earth does play a key role in this millenarian drama. As saints the Witnesses will belong to the New Earth where unlike their present state, they will be landowners and will leave in everlasting earthly wealth. It is important to note that the Witnesses do not spiritualise this to refer to what Gundry refers to as heavenly inheritance[732]. One of the Publishers actually confessed to the researcher that at the end of time the Witnesses are going to be busy burying the bones of the dead after which they will inherit the beautiful houses that the rich now are building for themselves. In other words, those building beautiful houses are doing that for the Witnesses. The New Jerusalem will be absolutely secure and following Gundry's suggestion this means that the saints that it symbolises are eternally secure peoples[733].

In addition, while it is true that the Witnesses now are suffering poverty, as is promised in Revelation this is temporary. On top of the land the Witnesses through Revelation are promised incalculable wealth of precious stones and precious metals and as Gundry notes we

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[731] *Ibid.*
[732] R.H. Gundry, *Op.Cit,* p. 258.
[733] *Ibid.,* p. 261.

should not be tempted to spiritualise the text but we should give it a materialistic reading that is consistent with the earthly locale of the New Jerusalem and the saints' need to be compensated for the current deprivation[734]. One needs to see the pictorial view of their perception of the condition of the saints in the New Earth; it is a literal reading of the promises in Revelation. Also, one of their key books that almost every publisher persuaded the researcher to read has a whole section on suffering, pages 393-400[735], with detailed scriptural references on dealing with suffering. This shows how suffering is an important subject among the Witnesses.

Generally the psychology of sufferers is that they tend to think of themselves as few, often even as alone[736] but just as John aimed at lifting the saints out of their sense of isolation by pointing to the multitude of the redeemed, the Jehovah's Witnesses often rejoice at the vast number of Witnesses saved (see pictures of successful conferences and statistics of the ever increasing number of members). Therefore, their apocalyptic ideology not only serves to define who they are but also holds together the whole movement and keeps it going as it provides for them adequate solutions to the current deprivation and through its promises provide for them inspiration and rationale to persevere. So, true to our paradigm, the Jehovah's Witnesses in Zimbabwe came out of a context of deprivation

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[734] *Ibid.*

[735] *Reasoning with the Scriptures.* New York: Watchtower Bible Tract Society, 1985.

[736] R.H. Gundry, *Op Cit.,* p. 260.

and have survived through the importation of prophetic traditions from the past that they then transform to address their contemporary situation of deprivation.

At this stage we now turn to the Johane Masowe and as we did with the Jehovah's Witnesses we concentrate on the historical origin of the movement so as to show that indeed the movement arose within a context of deprivation and then discuss briefly the millenarian ideology of the movement in a bid to show how through this ideology the Johane Masowe are responding to deprivation.

The Johane Masowe

When we talk abut the Johane Masowe the general impression is that we are talking about a homogeneous group operating under a unified leadership and structure. The truth is we now have several almost independent groups known as Johane Masowe whose only unifying aspect is a common history. However, broadly speaking we have three major groupings in "Harare", Bulawayo and "Mutare" respectively and this distribution is largely historical as well. Mutare here is meant to represent groups in and around Mutare that still meet, at least annually at the main shrine in Gandanzara. Harare is meant to represent the groups in and around Harare, going even as far as Muzarabani and these are the groups collectively known as the Johane Masowe VeChishanu. The groups in Bulawayo were not our main focus and we refer to them only in the history of the Johane Masowe movement. For the history of the movement, we rely heavily on Clive Dillon-Malone's Gospel of God vaPositori vaJohane Masowe

that refers to lots of primary sources and is a Shona translation with testimonies of some eyewitnesses in their original Shona language.

The Johane Masowe movement is known officially as the Gospel of God Church, although on a preacher's certificate granted to C Sairosi Kutsanzira on the 11th of November 1960, the church is referred to as the Africa Gospel Church[737]. The latter was the first official name official name adopted at a gathering in Zambia on the 14th of May 1963, but it was later changed to the current name in 1977. However, other sources refer to the Church as the Apostolic Sabbath Church of God and the devotees have often been referred to as vaHosanna especially in the formative years between 1932 and 1947[738]. Both primary and secondary sources are agreed that the founder of the church was John Shoniwa. Of course, sources do not necessarily agree on the middle names. Some members of the Johane Masowe who were interviewed call him John Phillimon Shoniwa Masowe[739] although the first and lat-

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[737] C. Dillon-Malone, *Gospel of God VaPositori VaJohane Masowe*. Lusaka: Teresianum Press, 1987. p. 9. See also the relevant picture taken at the main shrine at Gandanzara showing the construction of the new residents for the sisters.

[738] C. Kileff and M. Kileff, "The Masowe VaPositori of Seki Utopianism and Tradition," in: *New Religions of Africa*. Ed. B. Jules-Rosette. San Diego: University of California, 1979. p. 151. See also p. 154. A. H. Anderson concurs see his *African Reformation African Initiated Christianity In The 20th Century*. Trenton: Africa World Press, 2001. p. 118.

[739] Mr. Chikanya (First Names not given) *Interview,* (conducted by Joshua Mbeu) Gandanzara. Mr. Chikanya is a preacher who is now based in Marondera.

ter names were not his names at birth seems this confusion arises from the first name of the person who sewed John Shoniwa's first garment Phillimon. Dillon-Malone and other sources call him Shoniwa Masedza Tandi Moyo.

Dillon-Malone is careful not to give the year of birth and this is wise as the years of birth of most Shona people of Shoniwa's age are only estimates. Tradition has it that he was born on the 1st of October 1914 (and it is interesting as we discover later that the church was also founded on the 1st of October).[740] What is interesting for us is the immediate association of his birth with the number 7. Tradition has it that he was born at 7pm. He was the second born child in a family of 7. He was however, the first-born son among six sons. His mother Efie Masedza was the second wife of his father, Jack Masedza. Details of his birth are crucial because most of what we see as the mission of Shoniwa and the core beliefs among the Johane Masowe are items that developed from the legend[741] of his birth.

From his mother Efie's testimony[742] Shoniwa's conception was miraculous from the very beginning. According

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[740] *Ibid.* See also the relevant picture taken at the main shrine in Gandanzara.

[741] We use the term legend here without necessarily wanting to deny the historicity of the eyewitness account available. The term is used so as to emphasize the fact that these are accounts with miraculous elements that are not easily verifiable through ordinary historical means.

[742] The testimony was obtained from documents written at St. Mary's Township in Chitungwiza in colonial Zimbabwe and is recorded in detail in C. Dillon-Malone, *Op. Cit.,* pp. 19-20.

to this testimony when Efie was three months pregnant the child in the womb began to leap in an extraordinary way. Although there was not an equivalent of Mary, the leaping of the child in the womb compares with what took place when John the Baptist lept in Elizabeth's womb. It is not surprising that when he began his ministry Shoniwa called himself John the Baptist. At this time Efie's husband Jack was imprisoned in Rusape for refusing to pay tax. When she experienced this extraordinary leaping of the child she went to Rusape and told her husband who told her that all was going to be well but she was not supposed to tell the clergy in her area. These were probably either Catholic priests with whom he had a lot of conduct or Methodist priests or missionaries with whom, according Murphree, he was quite familiar. What is interesting is that the husband Jack wanted this pregnancy to remain a secret because if the priest knew about it they would seek to kill the child. This reminds us of how Jesus was taken to Egypt for fear that he would be killed. What is important is that even at conception it was evident that in his mission and operation, Johane Shoniwa Masowe was going to oppose the white missionaries and would engage in a ministry that was going to cause a rift between his movement and the mainstream churches. However, what is more important to us is that the socio-economic and political environment at the time is not very different from the one we described when we looked at the historical origin of the Jehovah's Witnesses in Africa and Zimbabwe in particular. The question of tax was a serious problem that the Shona resented and resisted. Here Shoniwa was born when his father was in prison for

refusing to pay tax and as a typical Shona certainly Shoniwa was told about this misfortune and history of suffering at his birth and certainly grew up with it. We are argue that when he eventually formed his church[743] this deprivation caused by the oppressive system of tax still existed either physically or in his mind and it was a key factor that influenced his prophecy, mission and the kind of direction that his movement took. It is interesting to note that immediately prior to the formation of his movement he attended rallies of a popular labour union activist[744]. Our thesis that this movement is a typical millenarian movement that originated, as a radical response to deprivation is thus not far fetched.

The other key component of the thesis that these movements thrive on biblical traditions is not far fetched either as it can be vindicated by references, which we narrated above, to close connections between the legendary

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[743] There is a serious debate among researchers in this movement whether or not Johane Masowe intended to form a church. One school of thought represented by C. Dillon-Malone thinks he intended to form a church. The other school represented by my fellow researcher M. Engelke thinks this is an idea forced on him by scholars otherwise he never intended to form a church. In this study we argue that it is difficult to take either of the two positions because as is typical of millenarian movements and any other movement, the formation is evolutionary and structures usually come later. Unless it is inevitable to take a definitive position we do not think our conclusions are affected in any way if we assume as we do that Johane Masowe wanted to form a church consciously or unconsciously.

[744] M. Engelke, "Text and Performance in an African Church: The Book, Live and Direct," in: *American Ethnologist, Vol. 31, No. 1.* (2004). p. 77.

births of Johane Masowe and the biblical figure, John the Baptist, that Johane Masowe alleges he is a replica of.

When Efie came back from Rusape there was another incident, which took place. One morning when she was in a field she began to experience what looked like labour pains. As the pains intensified she became worried since the time was not yet, she saw a green cloth descending from heaven and she heard a voice commanding on her to get hold of this cloth and to kneel down and pray. This reminds us of Peter's experience in Acts that denoted the spreading of the gospel to the Gentiles. So, just as the Peter incident marked the beginning of the spread of the Gospel to the Gentiles, the birth of Johane Masowe would mark the spreading of the Gospel to the Africans, in particular, the black Zimbabweans. In her response to the voice Efie said she did not know how to pray. She was then taught the Lord's Prayer. It is interesting that Johane Masowe to this date recite the words of the Lord's Prayer as they were dictated to Efie. The narration is long and detailed but what is interesting is the substitution of the word "bread" for "sadza" in the prayer. Sadza is the staple food among the Shona and Ndebele in Zimbabwe. It is clear right from conception that the gospel that was coming was from an African to Africans. It was going to be indigenous. Efie did not tell anyone about this, instead she went to Rusape again and told her husband Jack who wrote down everything she told him.

On the eve of Shoniwa's birth a legend has it that the world was shaken by what looked like an earthquake with wild animals rushing to human homes in total confusion, huts were shaken too. Efie does not state this in her tes-

timony but believers say it happened and this belief is evident on the inscription that is on the gate to the main shrine in Gandanzara (see relevant photo attached) There is a strong belief among the devotees that this phenomenon took place to mark the birth of a "Black Messiah" and it seems this is the probable genesis of the designations to him like "nhumwa yaMwari kuAfrica" (the messenger of God to Africa) or "nhume kuvatema" (the messenger to the black people or the Africans). It is this revelation about the historical origins of the Johane Masowe that make us want to review once more theories on the origins and growth of the so called African Independent or Initiated Churches as we seek to contribute our own alternative interpretation.

We argue that the Johane Masowe, like any typical millenarian movement, originated in a context of deprivation that is evident from Johane's call and his teaching that is carried through by several of his disciples throughout especially Nzira and the community of disciples surrounding him. Also a point that has never been emphasised before the movement is millenarian in that it expects also an impending end of this world that is evident from Johane Masowe's commission and is carried through the typically millenarian Masowe ideology. However, what interests most is that Johane Masowe's millenarian ideology follows typically the traits from Revelation. This we discuss further as we get into relevant details of the key teachings of the Johane Masowe. For now we dwell briefly on the theories on the origins of the independent churches of which the Gospel of God church is part.

We are all too familiar with the debates on the terminology to be used to designate these churches ranging from judgemental terms like "nativistic", "separatist" and "syncretist" used by mainly Western mission church leaders[745], to more acceptable terms like "African Independent churches" and "African Initiated churches". These debates are not our main focus but they have certain implications on the conclusions we make on the origins of these churches. For that reason our discussion may imply and indeed utilize results from such debates.

We do not discuss these theories in any chronological order but rather we choose to discuss them depending on the amount of emphasis we place on them. D.B. Barret sees these churches as independent churches and independency for him is a manifestation of a vast movement of reform of the Christian community[746]. In other words, he sees striking similarities with the European Reformation. The churches therefore originated as an attempt to reform the Christian movement in Africa to suit the African. Jules-Rosette debated the use of the term "independent" and preferred the term "indigenous" to refer to the churches[747]. However, Anderson while concurring to the

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745   A.H. Anderson, *Op. Cit*. p. 10.

746   D.B. Barret, *Schism and Renewal in Africa: An Analysis of Six Thousand Contemporary Religious Movements.* Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1968. p. 168.

747   This is a conclusion he makes in a paper presented to the First International Workshop Of The African Society Of Social Science whose proceedings were published in *Christianity In Africa: Missionaries And Change,* 1986. p. 245. The proceedings are cited in M.L. Daneel, "African Independent Churches," in *The Growth And Significance Of Shona Independent Churches*. 1977.

notion of reform (note that he even gives his book the title, *African Reformation*) raises a very important critique that allows us to proceed without being bogged down with terms. Following the historical developments of the political independence of many African countries almost all mission-founded churches began to show efforts towards inculturation so as to be seen as indigenous and relevant to the African context and as such the term "African Indigenous churches" has often been used[748]. However, Anderson correctly observes that this term too is inadequate in that most of these churches are not completely free from foreign influence and cannot be regarded as indigenous in any normative sense[749]. For that reason he opts for the term "African Initiated Churches" following J.S. Pobee and G. Ositelu II's observation that the term independent no longer describes the uniqueness of these churches, which is seen in "their character[750] as African initiatives and, therefore, in accordance with the African genius and ethos". Anderson sees in the term he opts for both the independent and indigenous character of the churches and therefore the term is adequate. Anderson then sees these African Initiated churches as some kind of enthusiastic, lively non-formal spiritual Christianity freed from many foreign constraints[751], suggesting that these are churches that were founded as H. Turner puts it, in Africa, by Africans, and primarily for the Afri-

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748 A.H. Anderson, *Op. Cit.* p. 11.
749 *Ibid.*
750 *Ibid.*
751 *Ibid.,* p. 4.

cans[752]or as Barrett puts it, religious movements that have been founded either by secession from a mission church, or have been founded outside the mission as a new kind of religious entity as an African initiative[753].

The thesis we are putting forward here develops from a number of problems that we have with some implications of the theories presented thus far and follows closely M.L. Daneel's views regarding the origin of these churches. Daneel summarises suggestions of causal factors from a number of scholars that include H. Turner, G.C. Oosthuizen, A. Hastings and Barrett[754]. While these scholars do arrive at various conclusions regarding the origin of the African Initiated churches one common causal factor that comes out although not always explicit among all the scholars reviewed is that somehow the Africans who eventually break away to form independent churches suffer some kind of deprivation that comes out in the use of such terms like disillusionment, rapid industrialization and urbanization that resulted in massive numbers of black people displaced and finding themselves with no roof over their heads and no place they can call their own, social disintegration and political exploitation and many other forms of suffering to this effect. Turner points out explicitly to tax as a causal factor[755] and we have come a long way with our suggestion that deprivation was indeed

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[752] H.W. Turner, *Religious Innovation in Africa* Boston: G.K. Hall, 1979. p. 92.

[753] D.B. Barrett, *Op. Cit.,* p. 50.

[754] M.L. Daneel, *Quest For Belonging.* Gweru: Mambo Press, 1987. pp. 68-88.

[755] *Ibid.,* p. 70.

a key factor in the origin of these movements. We argue that the formation of the Johane Masowe movement was more than just a "quest for belonging"[756]. We agree with the school of thought that argues the millenarian message that is so strong in this movement is a key factor in terms of the emergence of the movement and as we have established before this kind of ideology cannot arise unless it is a radical response to deprivation. We are faced here with Africans who are very anxious, very much depressed by economic, cultural, social, psychological and political problems that certainly inspire millenarianism.

Therefore, we mark a point of departure from the scholars mentioned above when they see these churches as independent in that they are free from foreign influence. We argue that the Johane Masowe movement follows the paradigm we have established and can be understood in the light of our conceptual metaphor of millenarianism. Like a typical millenarian movement the Johane Masowe utilize biblical traditions from the past especially form the prophetic book of Revelation to address situations of deprivation facing its members. The issues to be address are outlined clearly right from the beginning at the call of the leader and the biblical traditions upon which what kinds of action and the direction to take are based are narrated and hinted to in a very dramatic way in the eyewitness account of Johane's call.

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[756] *Ibid.,* p. 80.

Johane's Call

Shoniwa's call can be reconstructed from two testimonies from two eyewitnesses Samson Mativera and Onias Bvuma written on 1 October 1932 and 14 October 1932 respectively[757]. According to Samson Mativera Shoniwa, Mativera himself and a Mr Chourombe Mazhambe were workers at a certain farm (*papurazi* as farms are commonly known among the Shona) and were staying in the same room[758]. At this time Johane was still known as Shoniwa and was nicknamed "Susupenzi", a Shona name for a five-cent coin then. It is important to note that the nickname was a derogatory denoting a very poor seriously deprived person and of course as farm labourers Shoniwa and his friends were marginalized persons suffering deprivation. However, like a typical prophetic call, his call empowered and raised him to prominence and was a source of authority that through out his ministry he always called upon.

One day Shoniwa fell ill. Using logs Mativera and Mazhambe secured the door to their room at night so that Shoniwa would not escape at night since his illness was not normal. It was like he was mentally disturbed. On this particular night, the two woke up in the middle of the night only to discover that Shoniwa had escaped but to their surprise the door was locked and the logs were as they had fixed them onto the door. They heard Shoniwa speaking to someone, who according to the two witnesses

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[757] C. Dillon-Malone, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 21-28.
[758] *Ibid.*

was Satan outside. As is typical of Jesus' temptations Satan was offering Shoniwa everything in heaven and on earth and Shoniwa was refusing saying, "Get behind me Satan!" This happened for some time and Shoniwa giving the same reply. Satan is said to have left him for some time and then came back and then said to Shoniwa, "I have come to take back my sins from you. I removed four ten cent coins from one of your sides." Still Shoniwa told Satan to leave him alone. After this incident Shoniwa knocked the door Mativera and Mazhambe let him in. He was feeling cold, breathing heavily and showed every sign that he was seriously ill. According to Mativera died early in the morning before sunrise

At sunrise Mativera says they heard a voice, which they believed, was God's voice, calling Shoniwa from heaven. According to Mativera, God called Shoniwa three times using his nickname. This reminds of Samuel's call. Mativera says Shoniwa's body was in the room but they heard his voice as if it was in heaven. When Shoniwa was called he answered, "You are Lord. Be gracious to me." Shoniwa was then instructed to sing a song, "Be gracious to us Lord! Alleluya! Alleluya!" that is a popular among the Johane Masowe to this day. In the ensuing conversation God is said to have told Shonhiwa that he was ill because of his sins from birth. God wanted to take Shonhiwa now for there was a task God wanted him to do. However Shonhiwa pleaded with God to take him back to the earth where there were more people. God then allowed him to return to earth and according to Mativera, immediately Shonhiwa came back to life. His first words were, people of this world are in pitch darkness. Did you

listen to me speak with the Father. God wanted to give me work to do in heaven but I requested God to allow me to come back here on earth so that I can teach people here." So, we witness here a typical example of a prophetic call narrative following the general pattern of call narratives in the Old Testament but this is a contextualized theophany and commission thriving on both the Old Testament and the New in which Johane like all Shona mediums falls ill as a sign that some important external force wants to possess him but unlike the Shona mediums Johane sees visions of the New Jerusalem. Therefore, in the case of the Johane Masowe traditions from the past are not necessarily written but rather they become part of the drama as they are acted out and contextualized in an apocalyptic drama. This dramatization becomes more pronounced among the Johane Masowe VeChishanu who claim that the Bible is present among them, as Engelke puts it, "live and direct"[759].

In a similar incident, he is said to have died again and spoke to God again in heaven. When God called him again he was instructed to sing the song he had been taught before. He sang the song and he was then anointed with oil after God baptized him in the name of the Father, the son and the Holy Spirit. According to what Mativera heard, God gave Shoniwa the name John (which we are translating as Johane following how his own followers called him and spelt his name). According to the voice from heaven that Mativera heard, John existing from the beginning and still existed to date. We seem to

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[759]   M. Engelke, *Op. Cit.*

get echoes of what is John 1:1-3 from this time on nobody was supposed to call him Susupenzi but "Baba Johane" (Father John). Shoniwa was instructed from then on to respect other people. He was to call men with the title of respect, Father and women he would call, Mother. To date Johane Masowe men are called "Madzibaba" and the women are referred to as "Madzimai."

From there, Mativera says Shoniwa Now John was given the Ten Commandments but it is interesting that Mativera does not talk about the commandment regarding the Sabbath. Each time a commandment was read to him, John responded, "Lord be gracious to us and help us to keep the Ten Commandments." According to Mativera the Ten Commandments he heard from heaven were:

> You shall not have any other God except me. You shall not make yourself a graven image. You shall not worship idols nor do work for these idols. You shall not use the name of Lord God falsely for the Lord will certainly punish those that do so. You shall honour your mother and father so you days on earth shall be increased by the Lord. You shall not kill. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbours. You shall not covert your neighbour's house nor his wife nor shall you hate your neighbour.

After each commandment John would respond, "Lord be gracious to us and help us to keep the Ten Commandments." Then the voice believed to be God's said, "For everything you shall say I will be listening from heaven." Again we witness a contextualized version of the incident at Mt. Sinai when Moses was given the Ten Commandments. It is interesting that Johane is also known as the Black Moses. However, it is crucial

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to note that right from the beginning the Sabbath becomes a key issue among the Masowe. We talk about this when we deal with the Johane Masowe VeChishanu.

Mativera says, John was then taught another song which he sang:

(i) March on you believers! March on with our army! Let the cross guide you. (ii) Jesus Christ, you have come today. You are in us and we are in you. You are in us and we are yours. (iii) Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy!

It is interesting how this verse too reminds us of Jesus Christ's words in John 17. The last verse to date forms an important chorus for most songs that the Johane Masowe sing. Mativera narrates events that are believed to have taken place before Johane went to Mount Marimba. Onias Bvuma who recorded the events on The 14th of October 1932 narrates the events that took place leading to Johane's ministry from Mount Marimba.

Bvuma knew Shoniwa already as Johane. According to him, Johane stayed in Marimba and was known as a carpenter residing at a farm belonging to some white farmer in Marimba. At the farm Johane was known by the name Peter that the priests back home in Gandanzara gave him. It was probably on his baptism certificate and he was probably employed on this farm on the basis of this baptism certificate.

Bvuma says one day Johane was riding s bicycle and was going to a place called Nyabira. He fell ill; probably he got into hid usual trance while riding on the bicycle. He fell off the bicycle and got injured. He was

taken back to the farm. The white farmer who was the owner of the farm that Peter (Johane) his worker was ill came to see him. He did not understand what kind of illness Peter was suffering from and so he returned to his house without attending to Peter.

That evening Johane had a dream he was in a house full of flowers. Johane's supervisor came to see him and saw Johane surrounded by flowers and burning candles. The supervisor called the owner of the farm to come and witness this, which he did. It seems the white farmer bore testimony to this as other sources record this in reasonable detail from an angle slightly different from Bvuma. According to these other sources Johane lit seven candles in his hut[760]. This is one very crucial incident as it is a dramatization of Revelation 4:5 and it is not an accident that on the official stamp and logo of the Gospel of God church this verse is clearly inscribed with the picture of the golden stand with its seven candles lit and standing on the whole globe. The latter imagery implies that Johane while focusing on Africa conceived of his mission as a universal one.

He owner of the farm did not understand this either and ordered his farm workers to take Johane to the rural area in Nyamweda outside Harare, south of Norton for treatment. Unfortunately Johane died at 1o'clock in the afternoon of the following day. The white farmer was told and he came to see Johane. He then asked his workers to collect the body and bury it around 4 o'clock

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[760]   See for example, B. Sundkler and C. Steed, *A History Of The Church In Africa*. London: Cambridge University Press, 2000. p. 970.

the same day. The workers could not finish digging a grave and burying him since it was late so they put the body in the grave and put metal sheets on the grave hoping to bury the body the following day. It is here that something dramatic is said to have happened.

At 7 o'clock (please note again the occurrence of the number 7) the workers went to the grave to complete the burial and they were shocked to discover that Johane's body was not there. The y told the owner of the farm who probably took it lightly and simply said he was going to report with the police of which thing he probably did. According to Bvuma when Johane rose from the death he went up Mount Marimba near Hunyani River. Nobody witnessed the resurrection but Bvuma and the other workers saw Johane the following day in the mountain and he was singing a song called "Hosana." This has become a key song among the Johane Masowe and a key mark of their identity.

The workers reported this to their boss who came immediately. According to Bvuma the white farmer began to question Johane so as to ascertain what had happened. From this point onwards Bvuma records Johane's words in first person singular, implying that he was quoting Johane verbatim.

According to Johane's own testimony, when his body was placed in a grave, a man appeared and took him to heaven. When they approached the first gate they saw another man who called himself Abraham. It is important to note here that as we discuss later, Abraham occupies a very important place in the Johane Masowe Theology and there are songs formulated around the figure of Abraham.

According to the testimony, Abraham opened the gate and Johane and his escort entered. They approached the second gate manned by Isaac and a third one manned by Jacob. This is a vital to note because again the patriarchs occupy a very important place in the theology of the Johane Masowe and socially the Johane Masowe are organized along patriarchal lines. When the two were at the third gate Johane says he heard voices of people whaling and crying and he became afraid. The gate was opened and they. At this point Johane narrated something with very close parallels to John's vision in the book of Revelation. He saw a big river as glorious as the sun with people that could not be counted so full of joy that Johane felt a burning desire to be part of them and the city was so glorious that he felt a burning desire to be its citizen.

When Johane approached the river he came across Peter with two other men who told Johane that nobody was allowed to enter the city unless he or she is baptized. Again note the parallels with John 3. Johane stepped into the river and Jesus came and grabbed him by the hand. Immediately a crowd of infants, that Johane later discovered were born as twins, came to the river. They suffered cruel deaths, some had been burnt in the fire and others were suffocated in huge clay pots. Johane learnt that the early Shona people had killed these infants. In the traditional Shona society it was considered a bad omen, in fact evil, to give birth to twins, a disabled child or an albino. These were common grounds for divorce and sometimes excommunication from society. So, women would get rid of such children at birth.

Johane says the infants asked Jesus when the world would end so that their fathers would receive their due judgement and punishment for their crime. Jesus comforted them saying it would be soon. They were given white robes and they left. Immediately another group of infants and children came. These had been killed through acts of witchcraft. These came crying demanding to know from Jesus why they had been killed. Angels around Jesus suggested it was better some body among the Africans was send among them because they were now very evil. Jesus then baptized Johane and commissioned him to go back to Africa with a message that they should repent from the witchcraft, as the world was about to come to an end. There he was given the name John the Baptist for he was going to preach to Africans and baptize them. The missionary churches had failed to teach the Law among the Africans and they had failed to teach the Law among the Africans and they had failed to address African problems. Again he was told to sing "Hosana" and another song "Mweya Mutsvene." He was escorted through the gates and he found himself standing by the grave and beside him there was a rod, white gown and a small Bible. He took these three items and went up Mount Marimba. These became Johane's key tools for ministry.

It is in this context that we find Engelke's depiction of Johane Masowe as a Bible-burning prophet[761] unattainable. May be Engelke's conclusion arises from the fact that most of his studies of the Johane Masowe were concentrated on one group, the Johane Masowe VeChishanu

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[761]   M. Engelke, *Op. Cit.,* p. 77.

who do not read the Bible argue that "*Bhaibheri munya*" or "*Bhaibheri chitunha*."[762] A big piece of our thesis is that the Bible is the fertile ground upon which the millenarian movements thrive. Thus, this observation about the Johane Masowe VeChishanu's view of the Bible would have certainly dealt a great blow to part of our thesis had it not been for the close analysis of the whole gamut of evidence from the history of the movement and a comparative analysis of the Johane Masowe VeChishanu and the Johane Masowe in Mutare.

In *Izwi Ramwari MuAfrica 1932,* a collection of prophecies and pronouncements from Johane Masowe himself there is a series of instructions based on several biblical texts but what is more interesting, on pages 9-13 Johane describes several trips that his followers must embark on and one of the trips recorded on page 11 is a trip to England and the purpose of the trip is to go and retrieve the three items, the rod, gown and Bible, we state above, which according to one informant are stored in a library in England.[763]

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[762] I think this is the Shona statement that was released when M. Engelke, Rebecca his wife and I attended one of the Johane Masowe VeChishanu church services, which Matthew probably did not hear properly for in his article cited above he has the statement "*Bhaibheri rinogara*" meaning "the Bible stays" and this does not quite bring out the actual metaphorical meaning of this statement. The first statement can be translated literally as "The Bible is stale i.e. sadza that has stayed overnight" and is thus no longer hot, while the second statement literally means, "The Bible is a corpse" it is dead, it has no life. The metaphorical meaning is that the Bible has overstayed its usefulness and it is thus no longer relevant.

[763] Mr. E. Mundonga, *Interview*, Mutare.

It is particularly fascinating that like the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Johane Masowe build their key apocalyptic ideology from the book of Revelation. We have already indicated that the official stamp of the church is designed from Revelation 4:5. While the stamp is believed to have been designed by bishop Gabellah[764], this as we argued earlier is traced back to Johane Masowe's call that is a dramatic interpretation of Revelation 4:5.

However, what is more fascinating in so far as it has striking parallels with the Jehovah's Witnesses is the Johane Masowe's view of the New Jerusalem. While the Jehovah's Witnesses take themselves, the suffering saints, as the New Jerusalem, the Johane Masowe take the "sisters" as the New Jerusalem. These are women that Johane Masowe recruited as virgins and took vows not to get married and they would keep themselves pure[765]. The sisters are sometimes regarded as the Ark of the Lord where the book of the covenant was placed[766] but the key imagery comes from Revelation where they are regarded as the New Jerusalem, "...*Mwari ndiyezve akati Mai Meggie ndiro Jerusarema remuAfrica...*"[767] (God is the one who ordained Meggie to be the Jerusalem of Africa). Meggie is in fact *mbuya* Matanhire the founding leader of the sisters and in fact the leader of the Gospel of God Church. When Johane recruited these virgins his vision was that they would vessels of the Holy Spirit. There are clear instruc-

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[764]   C.M. Dillon-Malone, *Op. Cit.,* p. 216.
[765]   Mr. E. Mundonga, *Interview*, Mutare.
[766]   *Izwi RaMwari MuAfrica* 1932. p. 1.
[767]   *Ibid.*

tions to support these sisters materially as the New Jerusalem of Africa and the Masowe strongly believe that when Johane recruited the virgins in a typical Mosaic fashion his spirit rested on them and when he died his spirit remained with them. Thus, the sisters are considered not only as the embodiment of the law but also as the vessels and embodiment of the Holy Spirit, no wonder why within the Johane Masowe VeChishanu they are called *Vamiriri veMweya*. Already at Gandanzara there is a huge complex under construction meant to be the sisters' new residence. It is interesting to note the money to construct this comes from the members and they do so willingly as there are blessings that go along with supporting the sisters. It is intriguing that the Johane Masowe like the Jehovah's Witnesses do not see Jerusalem as a place but a designation for a chosen faithful few, which is consistent with the suggestion from scholars that we discussed above.

All this is supported by biblical references, which is why Engelke's view above is difficult to agree with. Elsewhere we treat this subject in detail where we provide alternative perspectives to the availability or non-availability of the Bible among the Johane Masowe VeChishanu that fascinates Engelke and is subject of his study[768]. Otherwise the crucial questions are, is the Bible really absent among this group of the Johane Masowe and how are to account for this apparent denial of the relevance of the Bible?

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[768] D. Bishau, "The Johane Masowe VeChishanu's View Of The Bible And The Question Of Canonization" (*Unpublished*).

We observed, as we were among the Johane Masowe VeChishanu that most of the leading *vadare* were once members of some established missionary churches and therefore must have been familiar with the Bible one way or the other. Further most of the prophecies uttered were biblically based, for example, one prophecy that narrated a huge rock falling down reminds us of Jesus' remark in Luke 10:18. Nzira himself, the leader of this group refers to various biblical figures and considers himself possessed by the spirit of Abraham and sometimes the spirit of Moses. He claims *baba* Johane's spirit is upon him and when he speaks in spirit he repeats *baba* Johane's mission to Africa. Otherwise when they say they do not read the Bible does it mean it is absent among them? We still maintain our position that the Bible is the fertile ground upon which the millenarian thrives ideologically.

Analysis and Conclusion

This last sub-section may give us the impression that we have not been analysing our data all along and that may be our discussion is the final seal on the subject. To the contrary, what we intend to do in this last section is to critically restate once more our thesis and say what in our view is the trajectory that knits together our chapters so as to leave the reader with a clearer picture of the journey we have travelled together thus far.

In chapter 1 we took the first step into building our thesis by marking two point of departure from previous studies. The first one was a point of departure we marked in terms of methodology. We took a bold decision to merge biblical exegesis and social analysis amid strong

criticism against such a merger with major objections against this mixed marriage being that the possibility or wisdom or legitimacy of such a mixed marriage is dubious and like any new method, the path to its maturation will be littered with the debris of trial and error[769]. Now that we are at the end of the journey in which this merger has been the key interpretative tool, we look back and do not see any debris significant enough to warrant the caveats and even the catcalls of the critics of the merger. Therefore, like Elliot we do not share this jaundiced view of the biblical exegetical-sociological marriage and we agree totally with those like him who argue that the significance of the merger is that it helps us to reach the desired results of expanded horizons, sharper insights, and more comprehensive understanding of connections and processes previously perceived in one dimensional, one disciplinary view[770]. We have had the opportunity to trace the development of millenarian movements right from the beginnings of Israelite history right to contemporary millenarian movements in Zimbabwe, something impossible outside the expanded horizons of the paradigm and conceptual metaphor of millenarianism that we envisaged through this marriage.

Second, in the same chapter we disagreed with the emphasis on rituals and other external forms of religious movements and argued that we get a much more com-

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[769] J.H. Elliot, "Social-Scientific Criticism Of The New Testament: More On Methods And Models," in *Semeia An Experimental Journal For Biblical Criticism vol. 35.* Ed. By J.H. Elliot. Decatur: Scholars Press, 1986. p. 2.

[770] *Ibid.*

prehensive picture of what there is in the movements and what it is that make them survive and effect social change if we look at their internal logic in terms of the key ideology that holds them together. It may be apparent that we take wholesale the socio-psychological hypothesis of Cohn regarding the origin of millenarian movements. For Cohn one of the decisive factors influencing the causation of millenarian movements is the ready availability of a traditional religious world view that has a definite promise of a future age of bliss to be enjoyed by a faithful remnant[771]. This traditional promise does provide an indispensable basis for the millenarian faith[772]. Cohn's observation that where the religious cosmology has no place for such a fantasy, millenarianism cannot develop[773], is key to our thesis where we suggested that prophetic traditions from the past, pregnant with such a concept are imported and are given the necessary prominence to form the core of the millenarian ideology that not only make them able to address contemporary situations of deprivation but also give them the necessary malleability to survive. As we argue throughout the dissertation, for this to happen there has to be a prophet who carries out this adaptation of traditions from the past and therefore one who becomes, as Cohn puts it, the bearer of the resulting ideology[774]. However, we mark a point of departure from a further sugges-

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[771] N. Cohn, "Medieval Millenarianism," in *Millennial Dreams In Action Essays In Comparative Study*. Ed. By S. Thrupp. The Hague: Mouton and Co., 1962. p. 42.

[772] *Ibid.*

[773] *Ibid.*

[774] *Ibid.*

tion from this school of thought that the survival of the millenarian movement is also dependent upon the personality of the prophet who if he is able to convey an impression of absolute conviction becomes the nucleus of the millenarian movement[775]. We have observed that one of the characteristics of the millenarian movements is that they strive as much as is possible to create an egalitarian community and this is true of the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Johane Masowe that we studied. It is the millenarian ideology that keeps the movement going as it provides the necessary link with the past and the necessary promise of total salvation from suffering in the imminent future. This ideology, particularly the promise of a better future as well as the organizing principle of a new set of values by which the millenarian governs one's conduct, is the distinctive feature of the movement that keeps their heart pumping.

Indeed tactical policy is part and parcel of ideological commitment[776]. However, with the Jehovah's Witnesses it is always explicit and it may be easy to discern what tactical policy they are following from their interpretation of the Scriptures. With the Johane Masowe VeChishanu in particular, tactical policy is not always explicit. May be what we regarded as a confounded variable within the Johane Masowe VeChishanu, the absence of the Bible in their rituals, is perhaps tactical policy. Elsewhere as we stated above, we treat this subject in detail, but a point we raise in this debate that is worth noting even now is that

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[775]   *Ibid.*
[776]   *Ibid.,* p. 245.

where there is the presence of a written text, the Bible, then emphasis is on it as a source of authority. This is clear with the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Johane Masowe in Mutare where the Bible takes centre stage. Nzira, the celebrated leader of the Johane Masowe Ve-Chishanu, looked at from the point of view of the perspective of Transactional Psychology probably intended to put emphasis on himself by creating a myth around him thereby producing a parent ego in and around himself through the claim that the spirits of Johane, Moses, Abraham, and all important biblical figures like Peter[777], operate in him and therefore, the Law, let alone, the Bible as a whole is "live and direct" in his person. That ideological tactic to shift emphasis from the written text to him grants Nzira not only a lot of power but also lots of authority that results in the development of a child ego within the individual members. He becomes the authority himself. This we observed as he would order people to stand up and to sit down and they would do that without any questions asked. Perhaps what we thought was a confounded variable, with this explanation may become an explanatory one after all. So, while the Bible is physically absent, it does not necessarily mean it is not important. Therefore, the claim that the Bible is the fertile ground

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[777] The order in which we name these characters from the Bible does not reflect the chronology in which they appear in the Bible but the importance attached to them and frequency they manifest themselves in Nzira's prophecy. The spirit of Peter does not appear that frequently, but each time it manifests, the followers believe Nzira is usually cheeky.

upon which the millenarian thrives ideologically stands true even for the Johane Masowe VeChishanu.

Why is the Bible this significant for the millenarian? There has always been, and will always be, attempts to emulate biblical ideals and models everywhere, anywhere and at all times among biblically based movements. This brings about the universal millenarian pattern that we have structured in the form of the paradigm we give in this study. Besides, prophetic revelation is always based on an image, a vision of a better future, but what is more important, a canon or standards for a new and better world. The image and vision also provides structures to accept the suffering into their own movement and to reject the "outside society" responsible for the deprivation or humiliation that the millenarian are suffering. In particular, the Bible provides the moral utterances and the ideological convictions that provide the power to determine the pace and direction for social action and eventually change[778]. Our conviction that there is a syntagmatic link between relative deprivation and the emergence of millenarian movements can be vindicated and as we state earlier on, this prescribes the urgency to study these movements and this also speaks volumes of the importance of such a study like ours.

Therefore, our study satisfies the four basic objectives of the sociological analysis of social movements in general, which J. Wilson summarises succinctly. The first objective is to construct a definition of social movements

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[778] J. Wilson, *Introduction To Social Movements.* New York: Basic Books, INC., Publishers, 1973. p. 3.

that meaningfully separates them as action systems from related phenomena and at the same time classify them according to some logical system[779]. We have been particularly concerned with the definition of millenarian movements and not social movements in general. However, the second part of the objective has been one of our main emphases. We have managed to detect a paradigm where the millenarian is confronted with deprivation then responds to this deprivation by way of importing important traditions from the past especially the visions that promises an impending destruction of the present world and imminent presence of a better world in which the millenarian's estimation of honour is restored. The destruction is catastrophic and total and so is the expected change in the condition of the millenarian. For that reason we take the response of the millenarian as radical. The second objective is to make generalizations about the social conditions that give rise to social movements and to understand the process whereby people become involved in them. With biblical millenarian movements we formulated our hypothesis in the form of the conceptual metaphor of millenarianism that we found valid even for the two millenarian movements in Zimbabwe. We formulated specific propositions regarding the three independent variables we mentioned earlier into the paradigm stated above.

The third objective really is an item of further study and that is to measure the social consequences of social movements and, or, assessing their contribution to social

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[779]   *Ibid.*

change[780]. Also because our thesis was not formulated entirely along a descriptive survey design, and also because of our emphasis on the spirituality of the movements in question, the fourth objective was not quite satisfied and that is, to analyse the structures of social movements, asking what the typical behavioural patterns within the social movements are, how these patterns vary from one type of movement to another and what determines these variations[781]. In a limited way our study analyses the behaviour patterns of millenarian movements in terms of their response to deprivation by way of importing traditions from the past to form a basic millenarian ideology that becomes the basis for social action, but we do not go beyond that to study how this behaviour pattern varies from millenarian movements to other types of social movements as well as looking at what determines this variation. Again these may be items of further study.

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[780]   *Ibid.,* p. 6.
[781]   *Ibid.,* p. 7.

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2004 Jehovah's Witnesses' Year Service Report from 112 Branches and 235 Lands with a Total of 98 269 Congregations.

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This volume is a monograph which was submitted at the University of Zimbabwe as a PhD thesis. It deals with the subject of millenarianism, a movement which the author sees as developing from biblical times. He draws lines of connection between contemporary religious movements with prophetic and apocalyptic movements in the Bible. The author presents vast toms of data on prophecy, apocalypticism and millenarianism for students and biblical scholars alike. Further, ordinary readers of the Bible will find this volume fascinating to read. There is also detailed information on the development of the two contemporary movements, namely Jehovah's Witnesses and Johane Masowe – one of the most important African Initiated Churches in Zimbabwe.

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