1 INTRODUCTION

Exeges agree that the Book of Revelation (hereafter Rv) should be read in the same manner as all the other writings of the Bible. In the first place the Book is directed at the readers of that period. In the second place the specific genre that it represents should be articulated (Cloete & Smit 1992:56).

1.1 Possible socio-historical circumstances of Revelation

Exeges regard it as important to reconstruct the possible socio-historical circumstances in which Rv made sense to the original readers. Since the earliest traditions, such as that of Irenaeus (180 AD), it was supposed that Rv was written during the reign of Emperor Domitian, 95-96 AD (Carson et al 1992:473; Du Rand 1990:198; Thompson 1990:15).

There is much debate around the question whether a full-scale persecution occurred under Domitian (Schüssler Fiorenza 1989:8; Jeske 1985:145). Thompson (1990:107) regards the reference to Domitian’s reign as the Saevissima Dominatio, ‘most savage tyranny’, as unacceptable. It merely expressed the subjective rhetorical opinion of Domitian’s opponents (inter alia Trajanus) who wished to besmirch him (Thompson 1990:115). According to Meeks (1986:145), peace reigned during this time as long as one did not disturb the public order or wilfully affronted one of the symbols or agents of Caesar’s sovereignty. Moberly (1992:377) is of the opinion that Christians were only persecuted if they attempted to make proselytes.
The majority of exegetes, however, are of the opinion that Rv was written during a time in which the Christians were severely persecuted (Schüssler Fiorenza 1989:8; Botha et al 1988:2). The author was in exile (1:9); a Christian, Antipas, had been killed in Pergamum (2:13); imprisonment of some Christians in Smyrna was foreseen (Rv 2:10); and blood had flowed (6:9,10; 16:6; 17:6; 18:24; 19:2; 20:4) (Cloete & Smit 1992:57; Botha 1988:2).

Although a difference of viewpoints exists regarding the socio-historical circumstances of the persecution, one matter is abundantly clear, namely that there was indeed an ‘emperor cult’. Domitian emphasised his godliness and, as a test of loyalty, he demanded that he be addressed as dominus et deus (lord and god) (Carson 1992:475; Keresztes 1979:257). Christians experienced this situation as an intense insult to their faith (Cloete & Smit 1992:57). In addition, the rhetorical situation in Rv reflects that the greatest threat did not come from outside, but from within the congregations, in the form of compromise with Rome, the Jews and the heathens, as well as an inner lack of unity (Cloete & Smit 1992:57; Meeks 1986:147).

In the midst of this crisis, the author provides readers with a steady anchor: God is involved in their lives through the Spirit, which enables him to see all that is happening in his church. His Spirit gives them the strength that they need to resist Satanic confrontations from without and within. Through his Spirit, God has established his kingdom on earth.

1.2 The genre of Revelation
The term ἀποκάλυψις in Rv 1:1, inter alia, led to the fact that scholars came to regard Rv as part of the so-called apocalyptic literature. This name was given to a type of literature that flourished from 200 BC to AD 100 (Cloete & Smit 1992:56; Mounce 1990:18).

Informed readers of Rv are well-aware of the forms and conventions (such as symbolism and characters) of apocalyptic literature (Carson 1992:478; Wall 1992:12). In Rv an apocalyptic narrative with a prophetical eschatological focus is forwarded to the congregations in the form of a pastoral letter (Carson 1992:479; Wall 1991:13; Du Rand 1991a:287; Puskas 1989:51).

Biblical research has devoted particular attention to the function of apocalyptic literature. Morris (1989:24) states that an apocalypse ‘normally...purports to be a revelation made by some celestial personage (such as an angel) to a great figure of the past....The message is usually expressed in vivid symbolism, sometimes of a bizarre kind. It appears in difficult times and conveys the author's profound conviction that the troubles in which his readers find themselves are not the last word. God, in His own good time will intervene catastrophically and destroy evil.’ (cf Du Rand 1991a:299; De Villiers 1987:88 for a broader definition).

Rv exhibits many similarities with apocalyptic literature (cf Botha 1988:13)
with regard to the use of the terms 'Spirit', 'Holy Spirit', and 'in the Spirit', which are also encountered in Jewish and Christian apocalyptic literature. A fragment from the Apocalypse of Zephaniah clearly states: 'And a spirit took me and brought me up into the fifth heaven' (Bauckham 1993:155).

1.3 Rhetoric in a rhetorical situation

Rhetoric, or the 'art of eloquency' (ars bene dicendi) was already well-known in New Testament times as a result of the Hellenisation process (Du Toit 1992:465, 469). The most important role of rhetoric was to persuade or to convince. According to classical rhetoric, three ways of persuasion governed the concrete presentation of an oration, namely ethos, pathos and logos. By using ethos, the author/speaker attempted to present a positive image of himself to the readers/listeners; the logos contained the requirements for logical deliberation and the pathos appealed to the reader's emotion (Du Toit 1992:470).

These rhetorical principles appear in Rv and could be an indication that the author of Rv was well-aquainted with the principles of the Greek rhetoric (Du Rand 1990:358). He uses these principles in a rhetorical historical situation to lead his readers to an understanding and acceptance of their crisis or transition situation (Du Rand 1990:582; Botha 1988:13).

It is especially the logos aspect that is carefully developed. With the aid of apocalyptic symbols (symbols were an important aspect of rhetoric) and images, the author, inter alia, created a symbolic universe (Schüessler Fiorenza 1989:6; Vorster 1986:159). For the aggrieved Christians in Asia Minor ‘the author ... created a conceptual world in which the readers could find encouragement and resignation. Through symbolic transformation or conversion, the reader is able to step out of his desperate situation intellectually and to move into the world where the Lamb has conquered and where the oppressed are victors. This is the symbolic universe (world) which helps the reader to live from the consciousness that the socio-historical and political events in which they share are subject to a divine cosmic order of righteousness. In this way the empirically suppressed community is transformed to the symbolic universe where their rights are maintained on the grounds of what God has accomplished through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Put differently, it is a transformation from a life situation in Asia Minor to the world of meaningful symbols and imagery’ (Du Rand 1991a:262).

In this manner the readers could also meaningfully assimilate the present with all its intrigues, or as Thompson (1990:74) puts it: ‘The vision transmitted by the seer is not merely a “literary world” or a “symbolic universe”—a vision separate from the everyday life....The seer is constructing an encompassing vision that includes everyday social realities in Asia Minor.’

In order to create this symbolic universe, the author inter alia uses the concept ἐν πνεύματι (cf par 3.1.4.2). It is through the Spirit that readers are enabled to
enter God's alternative world, the New Jerusalem. Through the Spirit the readers in Asia Minor are enabled to anticipate eternal life.

2 THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The course of history from the resurrection to the second coming of Christ is one of absolute victory for the kingdom of God. The Holy Spirit is involved in this course. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, was a sign of this victory in the world (Potgieter 1984:3).

Initially the early Christians interpreted the ecstasy and wonderful occurrences of the Day of Pentecost as being due to the exclusive working of the Holy Spirit, without a richer theological balance. The Spirit was experienced as a personal power which filled a person in a dynamic way (Van der Watt 1989:407; Bauckham 1993:155).

Only with Paul do we find a broader theological reflection concerning the working of the Holy Spirit. The emphasis no longer falls on the ecstatic, exceptional and wonderful occurrences, but rather on the human-encompassing involvement of the Spirit with God's people. In many cases the theological reflection is specifically intended as a 'correction' of the ecstatic view. The Spirit is indeed active in the whole Christian life (Van der Watt 1989:407).

However, the later New Testament writings, including Rv, show a reduced awareness of the involvement of the Spirit; it is more formalised, more institutionalised (Bauckham 1980:66). There are no detailed 'theologies', although they may be assumed. The involvement of the Holy Spirit is more evident in everyday activities (Van der Watt, 1989:407; Dunn 1982:705). The prominent role of the Spirit is nevertheless an important characteristic of Rv. In Rv the terms 'Spirit' and 'Spirits of the Lord' are used in various combinations. In every case the Spirit is meant, although it is never called 'Holy Spirit' (Morris 1989:49). The reference to the Spirit (singular or plural) is one of the links between the letters, the foregoing and the following parts of the book.


In Rv the Spirit, in harmony with God and the Lamb (Son of man, Christ), is actively engaged as the mediator of the revelation to John. He encourages and warns the seven congregations. He gives them life and renews their life (Engelbrecht 1987:20).

In Rv several facets of the work of the Spirit are very clearly brought to light, namely his work in revelation, in redemption, in the church, in the world and in eschatology (Potgieter 1984:3). Bauckham (1980:66) is of the opinion that the references to 'Spirit' could be divided into easily discernible categories as found in
Rv: the Spirit of visions; the Spirit of prophecy; and the Seven Spirits. In this article we shall consider the concepts ἐν πνεύματι, the Spirit of prophecy and the Seven Spirits in Rv.

3 THE CONCEPT EN ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΙ

The concept ἐν πνεύματι, 'in the Spirit', is found four times in Rv, namely in 1:10; 4:2; 17:3 and 21:10 (Bauckham 1980:66). John's inaugural vision is introduced by means of the words ἐγενόμεν ἐν πνεύματι (1:10). It can inter alia be translated as: 'I was in the Spirit' (NIV); 'I came to be in the Spirit' (RIV); 'I became in Spirit' (Bruce 1973:339); 'the Spirit took control of me' (Engelbrecht 1987:15).

A very important aspect of the activity of the Spirit comes to the fore in 1:10, when John relates that he was 'in the Spirit' on the day of the Lord (in sacro tempore), and that he then heard a loud voice. In Rv 4:2 the same expression is repeated. According to 17:3, an angel transported him to a desert in the Spirit. Something similar is mentioned in 21:10 when John says that an angel took him, in the Spirit, to a 'great and very high mountain' (Engelbrecht 1987:15; Bruce 1973:339).

3.1 A survey of the history of the interpretation of ἐν πνεύματι

3.1.1 Late Jewish and early Christian literature

According to Bauckham (1980:66) and Engelbrecht (1987:16), the phrase ἐν πνεύματι was a well-known term in late Jewish and early Christian literature. With this concept was meant that the specific person had had an experience caused by an activity of the Spirit of God in the sense of the Spirit taking control of him.

According to Engelbrecht (1987:16), an Old Testament prophet saw visions and received revelations from the Almighty in a variety of ways while he was in a state of being taken hold of by the Spirit. Such experiences could take different forms.

According to Bauckham (1980:66), the phrase ἐν πνεύματι in early Christian literature, commonly meant 'in the Spirit's control', and had various connotations. It often denoted a temporary experience of the Spirit's power in prophetic speech or revelation, without any particular mode of the Spirit's operation being specified. In some cases (such as with Polycrates and the Didache 11:7-9, cf Bauckham 1980:66) the primary reference of ἐν πνεύματι was to the phenomenon of ecstatic speech.

In the four instances where this expression appears in Rv (1:10; 4:2; 17:3, 21:10) it each time refers to John's experience as a prophetic visionary. The meaning is however not the same in every case (Bauckham 1980:66).
3.1.2 ἐν πνεῦματι as a reference to John’s human gifts

Bauckham (1980:67) mentions that ἐν πνεῦματι is sometimes explained as John’s human spirit (cf Rv 22:6). It would then indicate that his rapture into heaven (4:2) and transportation (17:3; 21:10) was ‘in the spirit’, rather than ‘in the body’. This would then be synonymous with Paul’s ‘outside the body’ (2 Cor 12:2). This is, however, not the meaning of Rv 17:3; 21:10. The reference to the ‘divine Spirit’ in Rv 1:10; 4:2 shows that John’s experience was unique and in accordance with early Christian usage (Engelbrecht 1987:16; Bauckham 1980:67).

Du Preez (1974:2) states ‘that...even if “spirit” refers to John’s own spirit, the expression “in the spirit” implies the work of the Holy Spirit, for it was his work to prepare a man’s spirit for the divine visions he was to receive.’

3.1.3 An overview of contemporary interpretation of the concept ἐν πνεῦματι

In the history of interpretation of Rv, the expression ἐν πνεῦματι has been accepted as a signal of a unique state of personal visionary consciousness (Jeske 1985:452). There are divergent viewpoints regarding the meaning of the concept. It is difficult and probably impossible to determine its actual meaning. We cannot enter into the mind of the author nor reconstruct him psychologically two millenia after the fact (Jeske 1985:50).

Several scholars hold the view that ἐν πνεῦματι describes an actual ecstatic revelatory experience by John of Patmos, (cf Baur, Bousset, Charles, John, Lohmeyer, Caird, Lohse, Ford and Kraft; cf Jeske 1985:45). Mounce (1990:75,308) is of the opinion that this expression refers to a state of spiritual exaltation, best described as a trance, in which John experienced the entire visionary encounter recorded in the Apocalypse. Mounce (1992:3), in his recent commentary, is of the opinion that ‘in the Spirit’ means to be caught up in meditation about the things of the Spirit, in a state of spiritual exaltation. Schüssler Fiorenza (1989:149) considers that early Christian prophecy—of which Rv forms a part—constituted an ecstatic experience ‘in the Spirit’ and the revelation of divine mysteries. Hoeksema (1986:34) is of the opinion that the expression means: ‘(H)e was in a state of prophetic, spiritual ecstasy, so that he has separated from the world of sense and experience, and prepared to receive visions of spiritual things.’

According to Meeks (1986:144), Rv purports to convey the contents of a continuous vision experienced by the author, while ‘in the Spirit’ on the Lord’s day, that is, in a trance state. Morris’s (1989:52) view is that it may denote something like a trance. It is certainly a state in which the seer is especially open to the Holy Spirit and ready to see visions (cf Du Preez 1974:2). Attempts also continue to deal with Rv in terms of dream research (Jeske 1985:453).

There are also those scholars who are not in favour of the above theories. There are those who consider that John did not experienced a complete, but merely a partial ecstasy. The author’s sober knowledge of his world situation, his
congregations, the Scriptures and the artistic characteristics of his book seem to negate an ecstatic experience (Jeske 1985:453).

A few scholars can be quoted in this respect.

3.1.3.1 R J Bauckham
For Bauckham (1980:68) εν πνεύματι is a technical term for the visionary's experience of 'rapture' by the Spirit. It is probably to be taken as having both phenomenological and theological connotations, denoting both the visionary experience as such and the Spirit's authorship of it (Bauckham 1980:67). The concept has a psychological, theological, literal and eschatological meaning. Phenomenologically the visionary's experience is of the kind described in the Ascension of Isaiah (6:10-15). Isaiah experienced a real translation of his spirit out of the body (through the seven heavens). John remained a free, individual agent throughout his vision, but experienced a trancelike suspension of his normal consciousness. His normal sensory experience was replaced by visions and auditions given him by the Spirit (Bauckham 1980:68).

The four occasions on which εν πνεύματι occurs do not only have psychological, but also literal and theological significance (Bauckham 1986:72; Jeske 1985:453). Thus, for instance, the formula in Rev 17:3; 21:10 highlights the antithesis between Babylon and Jerusalem. For the rhetorical purpose of passing on the revelation to his readers, John needed to indicate that the whole revelation came to him εν πνεύματι—which was a theological claim as much as a psychological statement (Bauckham 1980:72; Du Toit 1992:470). The formula, therefore, gives his message, transposed into a literary medium, authority. In addition, the concept also has an eschatological meaning. It orientates the church's life towards the parousia. In this manner the formula gives meaning to the difficult circumstances of the readers during the reign of Domitian. The coming of Christ will end their struggle (Bauckham 1980:73).

3.1.3.2 R L Jeske
Jeske (1985:453) emphasises the literary purpose of εν πνεύματι. Linguistically the formula does not have the meaning of being in a state of ecstasy. In the New Testament the formula is used in a range of associations. It is not a technical term for ecstasy (Jeske 1985:456).

John borrowed the formula from his sources, but applied it in a new literary, theological and cultural context (Jeske 1985:456,454). John was also familiar with Paul's writings and the models Paul applied in his itinerant ministry in order to stay in contact with his distant congregations (Jeske 1985:458).

As an itinerant prophet, John's greatest crisis was his physical distance from his sphere of influence. Like Paul, the prophetic speaker became an author and his hearers readers (Jeske 1985:457). The language he uses is that of prophetic dis-
course.

The work of the Spirit in Rv is aimed at the church's congregational life (the *communitas*; Jeske 1985:458). To be ἐν πνεύματι is a symbolic code for participation in the community of the Spirit. According to Jeske (1985:462), this code symbol had different meanings for the community.

Firstly it was a symbol of identification. The author uses the code to convince his readers, from whom he is separated, of his legitimate prophetic message. The use of the code identifies the author as one of the believers (Jeske 1985:463).

Secondly, it is a symbol of reception (Jeske 1985:463). Everything John imparts to his readers, he has received from the exalted Christ and the Spirit. Nothing can be attributed to John himself.

Thirdly, it is a symbol of prophetic responsibility. He is responsible for writing down the apocalypse to encourage the believers, to judge the offenders and to proclaim hope to the steadfast (Jeske 1985:463).

Fourthly, it is a symbol of participation. Being ἐν πνεύματι on the Lord's day in one church is to be in *koinonia* with the others in their struggle and with the Spirit who addresses the others (Jeske 1985:463).

Fifthly, ἐν πνεύματι has strategic importance and implications for the broader structure of the writing, for instance, the strategic placing of the formula in Rv.

Jeske's (1985:464) conclusion is that the term ἐν πνεύματι cannot be used for ecstasy. The consistent communal dimension of the work of the Spirit throughout the Rv provides us with a basis for understanding ἐν πνεύματι as a relational symbol rather than a privately experiential one.

3.1.3.3 M E Böring

Rv should be understood as a Christian prophecy. John is a Christian prophet. Through the Spirit he becomes an interpreter of the history of his time and supplies his readers with the theological meaning of this history. He does not proceed from a private 'ecstatic' experience consisting of fanciful flights away from history into some other world (Böring 1987:261). Instead, the Spirit enables him to interpret, inter alia, the difficult times during the reign of Domitian as an integral part of the drama of God's saving act (Böring 1987:263). To this end he uses biblical vocabulary and examples from the Old Testament.

The goal and climax of the mighty acts of God is Christ (Böring 1987:264). John re-interprets all his apocalyptic symbolism and prophetic tradition in the light of the church's conviction that Christ has appeared in history. As will happen to the believers in the time of John, Christ was confronted and killed by the same Roman authority. But Christ was victorious. In this way the readers can make theological sense of the terrible events they are experiencing (Böring 1987:264-266). There is victory in Christ.
The four occasions on which the formula ἐν πνεύματι appears in Rv has literary and theological meaning.

In a literary sense, it is functional in the structuring of Rv and points, inter alia, to contrast. The 'loud sound' is, for instance, heard on Patmos and in heaven (1:10; 4:12). In 17:1,3 John is taken to the desert and in 21:10 to the high mountain. In this, the promiscuous is contrasted with the bride; the desert with the high mountain. In 1:10 the seer becomes conscious of Christ's activities in the church and in 4:1ff of Christ in the cosmos, where Christ is busy executing the judgements of God. In 17:3ff and 21:10ff the fall of Babylon, as epitome of judgement, is contrasted with the heavenly destiny of the bride (church) as the epitome of salvation (Du Rand 1991b:311; 1993:309).

The formula simultaneously indicates the basic components in the narrative division of Rv, and brings theological aspects to the fore. John writes under the impression that he is transported by the Spirit (Rv 1:10). The Spirit first lets him see the action and appearance of the glorified Christ on earth (the seven congregations). Secondly, the events and localisation move towards heaven in 4:1-2ff. John sees the glorified Christ in heaven ἐν πνεύματι—a carthartical journey (Du Rand 1991b:311). Rv is theologically bound together in three Christological movements in which the Holy Spirit is a key figure. Each movement rests on the work of salvation of Jesus Christ on the basis of which salvation as well as judgement can unfold: salvation and judgement in the church (Rv 1-3), in the cosmos (4:11) and in history (12:22).

Thompson (1990:56) is of the opinion that the formula ἐν πνεύματι especially has literary, psychological and theological meaning. Concepts such as 'going up,' 'opening' and 'Spirit' (4:1-2) are transformational symbols. There is another dimension to heaven that cannot be seen by the naked eye, but which becomes visible through transformational symbols (1:9; 3:22; 1:10; 4:1). John is transformed 'into the Spirit', a psychological transformation homologous to 'being brought into heaven'.

The Spirit speaks to him in the language of his own Jewish heritage. His vision extends beyond local politics to global issues, and beyond global issues to cosmology (Thompson 1990:5). He unifies the world into an organic whole, stitching earth to heaven, the present age to the coming age (Thompson 1990:8).

Thompson (1990:72) also pays attention to the prophetic revelation. The seer receives his visions 'on the Lord's day'—in sacro tempore—the day of worship in the early church. Prophetic revelation is both received and proclaimed in the context of worship according to Paul (1 Cor 14:26; Thompson 1990:7). Together with Aune (1986:89), Thompson (1990:72) is of the opinion that one of the liturgical
functions of Rv was to evoke a new actualisation of the original revelatory experience of the seer. According to Paul, every prophet should be allowed to give his revelation, so that all the people can both learn and be comforted. The prophet can use any one of several forms of worship: a prayer, a hymn, a revelation, or even a teaching. The important thing is that the services must be orderly and controlled. The true prophet, even when he is 'in the Spirit' has control (1 Cor 14:32). The close connection between worship and apocalypse in Rv thus conforms to what Paul says in 1 Corinthians in several respects (Thompson 1990:72).

3.1.3.6 J J Pilch

Pilch (1993:232) places particular emphasis on a psychophysiological explanation of John’s ecstatic experience. This explanation is based on ethnographic and cultural findings regarding similar experiences recorded among other groups in different parts of the world.

Owing to certain factors such as drug abuse, fugue states, catalepsy, somnambulism, stress and many others, man has developed an alternative consciousness. Following in the footsteps of Bourguinon, Pilch expresses the opinion that it is a condition in which sensations, perceptions, cognition and emotions are altered. It is characterised by changes in sensing, perceiving, thinking and feeling. It modifies the relationship of the individual to self, body, sense of identity, and the environment of time, space, or other people (cf Pilch 1993:235). It should be borne in mind that faith in and understanding of spiritual entities and their relationships with people formed part of the normal consciousness of the cultures of the Circum-Mediterranean world (Pilch 1993:234).

John and his readers also experienced stress—above all because of their inability to control life. And those who suffer the greatest inability to modify their own lives under existing circumstances in a given society, will be most likely to make use of altered states. Hence John could also have developed an alternative consciousness, something that was quite common in the cultures of his time and provided the accepted medium for communicating with the Spirit (Pilch 1993:238). In mystic states communication with spirits took place through visions (and conditions) which may be either private or public (Pilch 1993:238).

The visions in Rv may be properly understood as real, ecstatic experiences and spirit-guided journeys informed by the traditional stories of Circum-Mediterranean cultures (Pilch 1993:242).

3.2 Hermeneutical perspectives on ἐν πνεύματι

Research shows that the formula ἐν πνεύματι in Rv contains, inter alia, the following hermeneutical perspectives: a liturgical, an a eschatological and psychophysiological perspective.
3.2.1 Psychological and phenomenological perspective

Late Jewish and Christian writings make it clear that the best translation for this concept is: 'The Spirit took control of me', or 'in the Spirit's control'. Most theologians agree that the seer had an experience of ecstasy on Patmos. Meeks (1986: 144) is of the opinion that Rev purports to convey the contents of a continuous vision experienced by the author while 'in the Spirit' on the Lord's day, that is, in a state of trance. Within the vision itself, after preliminary instructions about each of the seven churches, John is transported by the Spirit up into the heavenly throne room. Phenomenologically, he was lifted beyond the things of space and time into the world of eternity (Barclay 1976:43).

Aune (1986:83) mentions that it is peculiar to apocalypses that the vision is narrated while all but brief references to the preparatory ritual procedures are generally omitted. The psychological and phenomenological are not mentioned. The non-rational and the ecstatic played an important role in early Christianity (Dunn 1982:9). The non-rational was not irrational and the ecstacy was not insanity. There was 'cool' ecstacy as well as 'hot ecstacy' (Dunn 1982:9). Visions were enjoyed by all the prominent figures, including Peter, Stephen, Philip and Paul (Dunn 1982:10). The Spirit also empowered the seer to see into heaven. The Spirit is an agent of prophetic revelation. God, who gave the prophets his Spirit, made John his messenger (Mozzaferri 1989:303).

'Εν πνεύματι need not necessarily refer to ecstacy or something like a trance. There is a very thin veil between the physical and the spiritual world. On one occasion Thomas (Jn 20:25) said to his fellow disciples that he would never accept the fact that Jesus had appeared to them, unless he was given certain proofs. Little did he realise that his words were heard in all eternity before the throne of God (the spiritual world), because shortly afterwards Jesus indeed appeared to him and gave him proofs. Similarly the Spirit could have lifted the thin veil between the physical and spiritual world for the seer and displayed to him, in a unique state of personal visionary consciousness, the spiritual world from his place in the physical world.

Charles's (1975:CIX) viewpoint should also be mentioned. He is of the opinion that just as the prophet came to use the words 'So says the Lord', even when there was no actual physical experience in which he heard a voice, so he came to use the words 'I saw', when there was no actual vision.

The same conventional use of both these phrases belongs to apocalyptic as well as to prophecy. They serve simply to express the divine message with which the prophet or the seer is entrusted. He can use the phrase to express his convictions as a prophet. It is difficult, especially for us rationalists, to enter sympathetically into the thought world and experience of our fathers (Dunn 1982:10). Apocalyptic is the antithesis of reasonable religion. The apocalyptist is the visionary par excellence.
3.2.2 Literary perspective
For the seer, however, it was not a question of unrestrained ecstatic utterances as with the early Christians. His version of the workings of the Spirit is more formalised and institutionalised (cf Van der Walt 1989:407). That which he had received in the Spirit's control, was cast in an apocalyptic mould and written down in a letter form (Carson 1992:479). For Aune (1986:89) it is a new actualization of the original revelatory experience through literary devices. As already mentioned, the formula could indicate an antithesis (Babylon and Jerusalem: 17:3; 21:10; cf Bauckham 1980:72); it is a symbolic code for participation in the community of the Spirit (Jeske 1985:458); it is functional in the structuring of Rev (Du Rand 1991a:311; Jeske 1985:463), and it might be explained as a transformational symbol (Thompson 1990:56). Blevins (1980:394) is of the opinion that John did his writing in Asia Minor, the very heart of the Greek culture. Blevins (1980:395) indicates clear similarities between Rev, the theatre in Ephesus and the Greek tragedies. According to him, Rev is a literary work in which John made use of Greek forms and motifs to communicate his message clearly to his readers. It is not, however, literary fiction (Visser 1975:25). Hendriksen (1952:40), refers to Rev as God's sound film.

For Engelbrecht (1980:20), it seems that the idea that the Spirit took control of a person and was instrumental in revealing divine truths and the will of God to him, would include the fact that the prophet had not become a robot. The prophet was used with all his human capabilities and shortcomings.

3.2.3 Rhetorical perspective
Rev also contains rhetorical principles. Jeske (1985:457) mentions that the seer uses, inter alia, the formula ἐν πνεύματι to convey a positive image of himself to the readers/hearers (cf Du Toit 1992:470). He is far removed from his readers, and, in order to convince them of his legitimate prophetic message and to be identified as one of them, he uses the code ἐν πνεύματι (Jeske 1985:463; cf Bauckham 1980:72; Du Rand 1991a:582; Botha 1988:13; cf also Du Rand 1991b:257ff; Schüssler Fiorenza 1985:181).

3.2.4 Theological perspective
The formula ἐν πνεύματι could also have an interpretative meaning. Through the Spirit the seer also becomes an interpreter of the events of his time and he conveys the theological meaning of these events to his readers (cf Böring 1987:261). The history of the readers who are experiencing a crisis is associated with that of Christ who experienced the same crisis. In Christ there is victory. In this way the readers interpreted their crises in the light of the history of Christ. They obtained insight into their present circumstances, namely that they formed part of God's reign on earth, in spite of oppressive circumstances (Du Rand 1991a:592,593;
3.2.5 Liturgical perspective

Thompson (1990:72) indicates that the seer received his visions 'on the Lord’s day' (in sacro tempore), the day of worship in the early Christian church. The same Spirit was at work in Smyrna, Thyatira, Laodicea, etcetera, as well as in Patmos, and each church had to hear what the Spirit wanted to say to all the churches (Jeske 1985:464). Prophetic revelation is both received and proclaimed in the context of worship and the seer expected them to read the visions in the worshipping community (Thompson 1990:72). The liturgy of the earliest church was inspired by the Holy Spirit. To sanction the prophecies that were read in the congregations, it would be desirable to use the code ἐν πνεύματι.

3.2.6 Eschatological perspective

Bauckham (1980:72) mentions that, in primitive Christianity, prophetic vision ἐν πνεύματι, was a manifestation of the outpouring of the Spirit in the last days. In itself it constituted an aspect of the church’s living in the age of eschatological fulfilment. The Spirit orientates the church’s life towards the parousia. Therefore, the code ἐν πνεύματι can also have an eschatological meaning (cf Du Rand 1991a:283).

The code ἐν πνεύματι can, therefore, have more than one possible meaning. One may also add to these meanings the psychophysiological, ecclesiological and soteriological significance of the formula. The Spirit empowers the church and strengthens her faith. He saves the church and protects her against Satan. As the Spirit of visions, he gives her the vision of victory in Christ.

4 THE SEVEN SPIRITS

As already mentioned, the author of Rv never uses the expression 'the Holy Spirit', but he uses the word 'Spirit' in several ways. The expression 'Seven Spirits' is encountered in 3:1; 4:5 and 5:6 (Morris 1989:49).

It is generally agreed that the expression is a reference to the fullness of the one Spirit of God. The figure seven is a symbol of fullness in Rv (Du Preez 1991:4; Morris 1989:49; Engelbrecht 1987:11). In Wall’s opinion (1991:57), this phrase suggests the wholeness of life which God continued to mediate through the Spirit within the believing community of Asia Minor (cf Bruce 1973:334). It could also be a symbol for the various manifestations of the Spirit of God which was localised in each of the seven congregations (Jeske 1985:462). Therefore, it does not interfere with the doctrine on the Trinity (cf Bauckham 1980:75; Wall 1991:57). This expression is possibly derived from Is 42:1; 61:6 (cf Morris 1989:49; Engelbrecht 1987:8; Bruce 1973:333).
5 THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY

To various scholars the phrase in Rv 19:10, ‘for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy’ is a crux interpretum (cf Bruce 1973:337; Ford 1975:284).

Morris (1989:222) is of the opinion that ‘the testimony of Jesus’ could mean ‘the testimony which Jesus bore’, that is, the message which Jesus himself had proclaimed and which was now committed to his servants. This message is the spirit, the heart of all prophecy. Jesus and his revelation of God is the content of the prophet’s message as it is about this that John was told to write in his book.

The second possibility is that it could also mean ‘the testimony borne to Jesus’, that is, the testimony concerning Jesus (Morris 1989:222). This would mean that this message is the burden of the Spirit who inspired the prophets. The true spirit of prophecy always manifests itself in bearing witness to Jesus. The Old Testament prophets, New Testament prophets, such as John, and the angels, all alike bear witness to the Son of God. Morris (1989:222) regards both meanings as true.

Here, two components of the text are of particular importance, namely the ‘testimony of Jesus’ and the ‘Spirit of prophecy’.

The expression ‘the testimony of Jesus’ refers, in the first place, to Jesus himself as the faithful witness (Rv 1:5; 3:14). What does his testimony include? The translation of the Good News Bible is acceptable, namely ‘the truth that Jesus revealed’. In this case the whole Apocalypse is his truth revealed to his people (Rv 22:16,20). Believers should cling to this as did Antipas of Pergamus, ‘my faithful witness’ (2:13), and in fact John too, who was exiled to Patmos because he ‘...proclaimed God’s word and the truth that Jesus revealed’ (1:9; cf De Smidt 1983:108,132; Ford 1975:285; Bruce 1973:338). This also presupposes that Jesus and the truth that he had proclaimed, and as it specifically appears in the Apocalypse, had become the responsibility of John and the believers. They were obliged to tell of Jesus and proclaim his truth. It is proclamation and parenesis (Du Rand 1991a:213).

A dynamic translation of ‘the spirit of prophecy’ is possibly: ‘it is the Spirit that gave the prophecy’. According to 1:10, the seer was specially open to the Holy Spirit and ready to see visions (Morris 1989:52). In this Apocalypse, therefore, the Spirit was instrumental in conveying to John the truth which Jesus had revealed. Each of the seven letters contains the sentence: ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’ The whole Apocalypse could, therefore, be regarded as a ‘speaking of the Spirit’ (14:13). Indeed, the whole book is called a prophecy (22:18), which again implies the inspiration of the Spirit (cf du Preez 1974:2).

6 CONCLUSION

The Book of Revelation was written to a community of believers in the Circum-Mediterranean area. Even if one were to accept scholarly opinion that there
were only local actions against Christians and not empire-wide persecutions, it is reasonable to conclude that the stress of actual experience or anxious expectation of local action would entail a stressful life-setting in which the seer of Revelation and the book's intended audience found themselves in the years around AD 95-96 (Pilch 1993:238).

The author articulates the wholeness of the life which God continues to mediate through the Spirit within the believing community (cf Bruce 1973:334). Through the vision the Spirit enables the readers to anticipate the New Jerusalem and eternal life. The Spirit creates a symbolic universe in which the readers experience a catharsis. Furthermore the Spirit communicates to the readers the truth that is preached by the risen Jesus. He tells them that the Seven Spirits represent the fullness of the Holy Spirit. He sees everything that happens on earth and supports his Church in his own unique way. He leads his Church to victory.

The Book of Revelation is also a literary work produced by an author. The Spirit is actively involved in this literary work, as becomes evident from the various hermeneutic perspectives on the concept \( \epsilon \nu \pi \nu \mu \alpha \tau \eta \).

WORKS CONSULTED


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