There have been many previous attempts to identify a literary structure for the book of Revelation. Some proposals have used implicit indicators as structural organizers. Some examples of this approach involve chiasm, intercalation, reiteration and encompassing. Other
suggestions have emphasized the use of explicit textual indicators such as: “in the Spirit”; “what is now and what will take place later”; “come and see”; “earthquake”; and, of course, the number “7.” Regarding the use of the number 7, some scholars propose an overall septenary outline for the Apocalypse within which is included the explicit references to the 7 Churches, the 7 Seals, the 7 Trumpets and the 7 Bowls. Some outlines with less than seven major sections provide a septenary structure only for each major textual section. And, finally, some have

lieu of “recapitulation,” due to “its rather different use by Irenaeus, in the sense of going over the same ground again with opposite results” (p. 54 n. 5).

J. Lambrecht, “A Structuration of Revelation 4, 1-22, 5,” in: J. Lambrecht (ed.), L’Apocalypse johannique et l’Apocalyptique dans le Nouveau Testament (Leuven: University Press, 1980) 77-103. Lambrecht asserts that “through his encompassing technique the author of Rev. combines recapitulation and progression…” (p. 103). Thus, the Seal and Trumpet septets demonstrate linear progression in that they are open-ended and “contain all that follows: A seals: 4, 1-22, 5; a trumpets: 8, 1-22, 5; and A bowls: 11, 15-22, 5” (p. 87). But at the same time recapitulation/reiteration is evident in his outline by a three-fold repetition of the same letters. In this regard, “A A A mean introduction; B B B mean the six first plagues; and C C C the global end-event.” (p. 89).


John F. Walvoord, The Revelation of Jesus Christ (Chicago: Moody, 1966). His futurist interpretation rests upon the assumption that chaps. 2-3 represent “what is now” (i.e., the seven churches in John’s era) and that chaps. 4-22 represent “what will take place later” (i.e., the Church in the future) (see esp. pp. 47-49).

George Eldon Ladd (Revelation [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972] 14-17) divides the book of Revelation into four visions, each of which is introduced by the invitation to “come and see” (1:9; 4:1; 17:1; 21:9).


An influential treatment is given by R. H. Charles in Revelation (ICC, 2 vols.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1920). Structural details are given on pp. xxiii-xxviii of vol. 1; Hendriksen (More than Conquerors, 16-21) sees seven sections which historically “run parallel to one another. Each of them spans the entire dispensation from the first to the second coming of Christ.” Rather than simply a sevenfold overall structure, H. B. Swete argued for a plan based on 14 sections which represents a doubled seven in The Apocalypse of St. John: the Greek Text with Introduction, Notes and Indices, (3rd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1908) xxxviii-xxxix.

Austin M. Farrer, A Rebirth of Images: The Making of St. John’s Apocalypse (Westminster: Dacre, 1949) 45. He divides Revelation into six major sections with each section itself having a sevenfold division. Collins (The Combat Myth, 19; Crisis and Catharsis, 149) uses Farrer’s sixfold structural proposal but adds her own refinements such as a prologue and an epilogue.