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## IV. The Revelation of John

This writing could perhaps be regarded as a separate sub-collection because it purports to be a composite of seven writings of John to churches in Asia, Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea. Some of the city names are not unknown to the readership of Paul's letters, perhaps Ephesus like Laodicea is meant to allude to Laod or Eph. Smyrna and Philadelphia are known from letters of Ignatius, that are not preserved in the Three, but only from the Seven Epistles collection onwards, which was brought together at about the same time as Irenaeus’s redaction took place. Perhaps we may have to see the two redactional processes of Paul and Ignatius as somehow linked to each other.

Now the dating of the Rev is disputed in New Testament research and there are research approaches that place the writing of this book in the time of the late reign of Hadrian.[[1]](#footnote-1) But no matter which dating one leans towards, precisely because the Rev was not uncontroversial in its affiliation to the extended collection, it shows all the more clearly that the authors of the late 2nd century who discussed its position had an awareness of an actual framework of the Irenaean collection.

In terms of content, references have been made not only between Rev and Jn, but also to the Baptist tradition ("Messiah as Logos, as Lamb; Bridegroom and Bride, etc."[[2]](#footnote-2)). However, they are too minimal for them to be discussed in more detail in our context, hence, also the short note here on Rev.[[3]](#footnote-3)

However, Rev was an important conclusion to Irenaeus's collection not because of these references, but primarily because it concludes his collection by the authoritative voice of the Apostle to whom he attributed the greatest insight into the mystery of Christ: John. Just as the Apostle Matthew (or John) opens the collection with his Gospel and thus introduces the protagonist Jesus, continued by the other three evangelists, so, according to Irenaeus, the Apostle John concludes this collection with his letters and Rev.[[4]](#footnote-4)

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1. Here we should think in particular of the work of Thomas Witulski: T. Witulski, Christus, die sieben Sterne und die sieben „Gemeindeengel“. Zeitgeschichtliche Bemerkungen zu einer Motivdisposition in Offb 1,20; 2f. = Christ, the seven stars and the seven angels of the church: historical commentary on motif arrangement in Rev 1:20; 2-3 (2019/2020); T. Witulski, Tempus tempus praecedit - Eckpunkte einer spatialen Konstruktion von relativer und absoluter Zeit in der Apokalypse des Johannes (2018); T. Witulski, Die vier apokalyptischen Reiter Apk 6,1-8. Ein Versuch ihrer zeitgeschichtlichen (Neu-)Interpretation (2015); T. Witulski, Apk 11 und der Bar Kokhba-Aufstand. Eine zeitgeschichtliche Interpretation (2012); T. Witulski, Die Johannesoffenbarung und Kaiser Hadrian. Studien zur Datierung der neutestamentlichen Apokalpyse (2007). See also the dating and its discussion in L. Arcari, D. Tripaldi and T. Witulski, Discussion of Thomas Witulski's works on dating the Revelation (2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. O. Böcher, Art. Johannes der Täufer (1988), 179. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. A more detailed discussion is given in M. Vinzent, Die Auferstehung Christi im frühen Christentum (2014), 100-102. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See H.-J. Jaschke, Das Johannesevangelium und die Gnosis im Zeugnis des Irenäus von Lyon (1978). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)