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A CHRISTOLOGY OF THE APOCALYPSE
BASED ON THE LAMB PASSAGES

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Exegetical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Divinity

by
Donald R. Krueger
June 1956

Approved by: William F. Arnold
Advisor

John Theodore Mueller
Reader

Short Title

A CHRISTOLOGY OF THE APOCALYPSE



CHAPTER I

PERTINENT CLARIFICATION WITH REGARD TO THIS STUDY

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CHAPTER I

PERTINENT CLARIFICATION WITH REGARD TO THIS STUDY

This thesis attempts to set forth a Christology of the Book of Revelation, more exactly called in the transliterated form of its first Greek word, the Apocalypse. The purpose of the writer has been to present, to the best of his ability under God, the portrait of Jesus Christ which the sacred text of the Apocalypse paints. Certain limitations of this purpose were, however, deemed necessary, and a full portrait of Jesus Christ is not presented in this thesis. Upon study of the references to Christ in the Apocalypse, the writer realized that a consideration of all of them in an effort to construct a full Christology exceeded both his present ability and the limitations of time at his disposal as well as the requirements for a Bachelor of Divinity thesis. The writer has thus based this Christology of the Apocalypse on those passages which refer to Christ as "the Lamb." This designation for the Christ occurs twenty-eight times in the twenty-two chapters of the Apocalypse, as compared with but a few occurrences in the rest of the New Testament. Christ as "the Lamb" must have been significant, to say the least, for St. John, and this thesis attempts to bring this significance to the reader. In an effort to accomplish this purpose the writer has arranged the twenty-eight Lamb passages (those passages which speak of

Christ as the Lamb) in their context in logical outline form. Thus, this thesis presents a Christology of the Apocalypse on the basis of the Lamb passages in context. The Lamb passages are: 5:6,8,12,13; 6:1,16; 7:9,10,14,17; 12:11; 13:8; 14:1,4,4,10; 15:3; 17:14,14; 19:7,9; 21:9,14,22,23,27; 22:1,3. The contexts are: 5:5-7,8-10,11-14; 6:1,15-17; 7:9-10,14-17; 12:9-12; 13:7b-8; 14:1-5,9-11; 15:1-4; 17:12-14; 19:6-9; 21:9,14,22-23,27; 22:1-5. The Bible version quoted in this thesis is the Revised Standard Version. Unless otherwise indicated, the chapter and verse references are from the Apocalypse.

The writer's intense interest in the Apocalypse began about one year ago, in the Spring of 1955, when he took the Correspondence Course on the Apocalypse offered by Dr. J. T. Mueller of Concordia Theological Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri. This course introduced him to the Book and led him through it on the basis of the Greek text. Needless to say, such a first-time acquaintance with a book of the sort as the Apocalypse does not satisfy one, it rather whets one's appetite for further study. Consequently the writer's interest in this difficult yet wonderful Book has remained undiminished. When it came to choosing a topic for a Bachelor of Divinity thesis, his first thought was of the Apocalypse; and his second was: What portrait does it paint of its central Figure, Jesus Christ? The necessary limitation to the Lamb passages in the presentation of this portrait is explained above. It is with intense interest and burning zeal that the writer has attempt-

ed the rather arduous task of presenting in this thesis in logical outline form material which is often, by its very nature, beyond logic and defiant to the demands of an outline. As a result of his study and effort there has been etched upon his soul an irradicable image of the "Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." It is his hope that the reader of this thesis will be led not only to an interest in, or a deeper appreciation of the Apocalypse, as the case may be; but, far more important, that the reader will be helped to see Jesus Christ as St. John saw Him--as the Lamb.

The writer assumes the text of the Apocalypse to be the inspired, inerrant, infallible Word of God. He thus does not countenance the redaction and partition theories which have been foisted upon the text to suit mortal minds. He believes that the author of the Apocalypse is the Apostle St. John, who also wrote the Gospel and the Epistles which bear his name. He has found the arguments against Johannine authorship unconvincing. He holds the date of composition to be about 95 A. D., during the reign of Domitian. One's view of authorship and date of composition would, of course, have little or no bearing on the material of this thesis. The writer believes that for an appreciation of the doctrine of Christ (or of any other doctrine) in the Book it is not necessary to bring into the foreground a definite view as to the significance and design of the visions therein contained. The Apocalypse had to have a definite message of God for the readers of St. John's

day and it must have a definite message of God for the readers of the Twentieth Century. Basically that message is the same, only the circumstances of men change somewhat with the passage of time. To extract that message and to proclaim it, maintaining one's sanity and stability, demands the best that God has given a man; but the message is there, and must be extracted, as difficult and foreign to the modern mind as its apocalyptic dress may be.

With regard to the organization of this thesis a few points deserve mention for the reader's benefit. Chapter II, entitled "The Christology of the Apocalypse," is of a general and introductory nature. It treats of general Christological matters with special reference to the Book in hand, of the centrality of Christ in the Apocalypse, of His centrality as the Lamb, and includes the necessary background and grammatical material on the word "lamb" (*ἀρνίον*). The following chapters (III to V) then take up the Lamb passages, divided into three categories, and these further subdivided, as the Table of Contents indicates. The Lamb is considered as Conqueror and Executer of wrath, as Redeemer, and as Dispenser of life (chapter III); in His relation to the Holy Spirit and to God the Father (chapter IV); and in His relation to the saints (chapter V). The writer has bent every effort to achieve a semblance of unity, coherence and orderly progression in this unfolding of the Lamb passages, and to this end his original outline underwent constant revision as he wrote. The reader

may at times wonder why more is not said concerning a particular Lamb passage. This may be partially explained by mention of the fact that often only one truth of a given passage is the point desired in the discussion in hand. Since many of the Lamb passages come up for consideration several times, it is hoped that a compilation of the total material presented on a given passage would indicate that its significant facts have been adequately treated. To avoid unnecessary repetition, footnote references direct the reader to matters already treated or to be treated in a different connection.

As far as the writer has been able to ascertain, nothing of the nature of this thesis has ever been attempted. He knows of no Christology of the Apocalypse on the basis of the Lamb passages. Perhaps, the "artificiality" of such a study has kept many from attempting it. The writer recognizes this "artificiality"--the construction of a partial Christology on the basis of select passages--but he believes that, though "artificial," the study has been and will be not only interesting, but also instructive and profitable. Christologies of the whole Apocalypse have been written. In the Pritzlaff Memorial Library of Concordia Theological Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, there is a Bachelor of Divinity thesis entitled "The Doctrine of Christ in the Apocalypse," written by student Walter Ellwanger in 1928. The writer found to be very useful the chapter entitled "The Christology of the Apocalypse of John," written in 1942 by D. M. Beck and appearing

in a book entitled New Testament Studies. Die Christologie der Apk was written by F. Buechsel in 1907, but the writer was unable to obtain a copy of this book for his study. No doubt the definitive work entitled The Doctrine of the Apocalypse, written by H. Gebhardt in 1878, contains much material on the Christology of the Book. Unfortunately, the writer was unsuccessful in locating a copy of this book also. In addition, the renowned commentaries from the pens of R. H. Charles, H. B. Swete, and I. T. Beckwith contain some Christological material in the doctrinal sections of their introductory pages, although what is there offered is little more than an outlined reference to the passages which treat of Christ.

The data of this thesis were taken mainly from books dealing with New Testament Introduction, Biblical Theology, New Testament Theology, Johannine Theology, the Christology of the New Testament, the Johannine Christology, the Christology of the Apocalypse, and some of the numerous commentaries on the Apocalypse. The abundance of material in bound and book form precluded the writer's use of periodical material, which appeared upon perusal to offer little which demanded his attention anyway. With regard to the use of the data collated from these sources two points deserve mention. Since the foundation of the entire thesis rests upon the fact that Christ as the Lamb is an (if not the) important feature of the Apocalypse, the writer attempted to present a wide breadth of scholarship to undergird this fact.

Hence, chapter II, in which the centrality of Christ as the Lamb is presented, is replete with data from books of Introduction, Theology and Christology written by scholars of many stripes and decades. The other point is that in the actual presentation of the Christology on the basis of the Lamb passages (chapters III to V), several commentaries were relied upon quite heavily for the required exegetical material. The commentaries of H. B. Swete, R. H. Charles, J. Behm, R. C. H. Lenski, and M. Kiddle are the five upon which the writer depended. This dependence on these five commentaries was intentional. The writer felt that reliance on H. B. Swete was necessary because, as of 1907, his commentary was no doubt the definitive work on the Apocalypse, and even today it is unexcelled in many respects. The two volume work of R. H. Charles, which appeared in 1920, simply cannot be neglected in any serious study of the Apocalypse; it is monumental, and, although critical, will undoubtedly remain definitive for years to come, for it is an effort of a great scholar deeply rooted in apocalyptic studies. The books of R. C. H. Lenski, J. Behm and M. Kiddle were chosen to give the modern conservative Lutheran and American, the modern German, and the modern English viewpoints, respectively, on the Apocalypse.

With so much to furnish the necessary background and explanation we turn now to more interesting and profitable material --the Apocalypse's presentation of Jesus Christ as the Lamb.

CHAPTER II

THE CHRISTOLOGY OF THE APOCALYPSE

Jesus Christ is the central Figure in the Apocalypse. This fact, readily apparent to any reader of the Book, is attested by commentators and critics alike. Van Costerzee considers Christ "the center of the whole" in the Apocalypse, as in the Gospel and Epistles of John.¹ Likewise Westcott, comparing the Apocalypse and the Fourth Gospel, sees Christ as "the central figure."² In fact, the very words "central Figure" with reference to Christ find place in many a pertinent book on the Apocalypse.³ Even scholars who tend to be somewhat liberal and freely critical in the area of Biblical Theology do not attempt to gainsay the centrality of Christ. Barton admits: "In all these visions Christ is the central figure."⁴ Preston and Hanson take Dodd to task for placing

¹J. J. Van Costerzee, The Theology of the New Testament, translated from the Dutch by Maurice J. Evans (Second edition; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1871), p. 408.

²B. F. Westcott, The Gospel According to St. John (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1881), lxxxv.

³Floyd V. Filson, Opening the New Testament (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, c.1952), p. 218; Doremus Almy Hayes, John and His Writings (New York: The Methodist Book Concern, c.1917), p. 259; Archibald M. Hunter, Interpreting the New Testament (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1951), pp. 103-04; Ernest William Parsons, The Religion of the New Testament (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, c.1939), p. 164.

⁴George A. Barton, Studies in New Testament Christianity (Philadelphia: Un. of Pennsylvania Press, 1928), pp. 32-3.

the work of Christ in the background, when it belongs in the center.⁵

Looking to the Book itself we find that the opening words of the Apocalypse present its central Figure in a most striking way. "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him. . ." (1:1). The question immediately arises: Is the genitive (Ἀποκάλυψις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) subjective or objective? Several scholars, on the strength of the words "which God gave him" (1:1), hold it to be subjective (the revelation which Christ received from God and now gives in this Book).⁶ Thiessen, however, on the basis of usage, strongly contends for the objective case (the revelation about Christ). He states his position thus:

This book purports to be "the Revelation of Jesus Christ" (1:1). With due respect for the scholarship that differs with us, we take this to be an objective genitive, "the Revelation of the Person and Work of Christ." It would seem that of the twelve times that the word "revelation" (*apokalupsis*) occurs with a genitive, outside the present reference, only two could be subjective genitives (2 Cor. 12:1; Gal. 1:12), "the Revelation from Jesus Christ"; all the others are objective genitives (Luke 2:32; Rom. 2:5; 8:19; 16:25; 1 Cor. 1:7; 2 Thess. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:7,13; 4:13). When we add to this the fact that 2 Cor. 12:1 and Gal. 1:12 may also be intended to be objective genitives, the position we have taken for Rev. 1:1 becomes very strong.⁷

⁵Ronald H. Preston and Anthony T. Hanson, The Revelation of Saint John the Divine (London: SCM Press, 1949), p. 32.

⁶Thus W. H. G. Thomas, The Apostle John (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, c.1946), p. 346; A. T. Robertson, Epochs in the Life of the Apostle John (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, c.1935), p. 214.

⁷Henry C. Thiessen, Introduction to the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., c. 1943), p. 316.

If Thiessen's position may stand (and he is backed by Hort⁸), a strong point for the Christology of the Apocalypse is made, for Jesus Christ is then announced in the opening words as the Subject of the entire Book. But regardless of whether the genitive of the first verse is subjective or objective, the fact remains that "either makes Christ the central figure of the book."⁹

The adequate treatment of the doctrine of Christ in the Apocalypse, the fact that the Book is "full of Him . . . that He is the subject and substance of every part,"¹⁰ is attested by the fact that elaborate outlines of the Christology have been successfully attempted.¹¹ Charles, having stated that "the teaching of our author on this subject [Jesus Christ] is very comprehensive," and professing to deal with only the "main points" of this doctrine in his introduction, goes on to pack four pages with the pertinent Christological material in the Apocalypse.¹² Likewise Swete spends

⁸Robertson, Epochs in the Life of the Apostle John, p. 214.

⁹Merrill C. Tenney, The New Testament: A Historical and Analytic Survey (London: The Inter--Varsity Fellowship, c.1953), p. 408.

¹⁰Thomas, op. cit., p. 365.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 365-66; Josiah Blake Tidwell, John and His Five Books (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., c.1937), pp. 133-36.

¹²R. H. Charles, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1920), I, cx-cxiv.

more words on Christology in his introductory chapter on "Doctrine" than on any other one doctrine of the Book.¹³ And both Thiessen and Tenney outline the entire Apocalypse with reference to Christ.¹⁴

A listing of the names by which the author refers to Christ will afford a comprehensive overview of His person and work as fully presented in the Apocalypse. "The emphasis on names is one of John's cumulative attempts to make the bearer of the names significant."¹⁵ Christ goes under the following titles and names in this Book:

1. the Lamb (28 times: 5:6,8,12,13; 6:1,16; 7:9,10,14,17; 12:11; 13:8; 14:1,4,4,10; 15:3; 17:14,14; 19:7,9; 21:9,14,22,23,27; 22:1,3)
2. Jesus (9 times: 1:9,9; 12:17; 14:12; 17:6; 19:10,10; 20:4; 22:16)
3. Jesus Christ (3 times: 1:1,2,5)
4. Lord (3 times: 11:8 (cf. 1:10); 14:13)
5. His Christ (2 times: 11:15; 12:10)
6. the Christ (2 times: 20:4,6)
7. Son of Man (2 times: 1:13; 14:14)
8. Word of God (1 time: 19:13)
9. Lord Jesus (2 times: 22:20,21)
10. Son of God (1 time: 2:18)
11. the holy One (1 time: 3:7)
12. the first born of the dead (1 time: 1:5)
13. Lord of lords (2 times: 17:14; 19:16)
14. King of kings (2 times: 17:14; 19:16)
15. the Ruler of kings on earth (1 time: 1:5)

¹³Henry Barclay Swete, The Apocalypse of St John (Second edition; London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1907), clix-clxiii.

¹⁴Thiessen, op. cit., pp. 328-29; Tenney, op. cit., pp. 409-11.

¹⁵Dwight Marion Beck, "The Christology of the Apocalypse of John," in New Testament Studies, edited by Edwin Prince Booth (New York: Abingdon--Cokesbury Press, c.1942), p. 274.

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|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 16. the First and the Last | (3 times: 1:17; 2:8; 22:13) |
| 17. the Alpha and the Omega | (2 times: 21:6; 22:13) |
| 18. the Beginning and the End | (2 times: 21:6; 22:13) |
| 19. the Beginning of God's creation | (1 time: 3:14) |
| 20. the Lion of the tribe of Judah | (1 time: 5:5) |
| 21. the Root of David | (1 time: 5:5) |
| 22. the Root and Offspring of David | (1 time: 22:16) |
| 23. the bright morning Star | (1 time: 22:16) |
| 24. Faithful | (1 time: 19:11) |
| 25. True | (2 times: 3:7; 19:11) |
| 26. the Amen | (1 time: 3:14) |
| 27. the faithful Witness | (1 time: 1:5) |
| 28. the faithful and true Witness | (1 time: 3:14) |

Significant, indeed, is He to whom all these titles and names apply. To this list could be added the more "elaborate descriptive titles" applied to Christ, such as, "the living one" (1:18), the One "who has the seven spirits of God" (3:1), the One "who has the key of David" (3:7) and many others, which "embody the same circle of ideas as are more briefly suggested by the simpler designations; and only more vividly and richly express their contents."¹⁶

Despite the Christological fulness "no formulated doctrine of the person and work of Christ should be sought in the Apocalypse."¹⁷ It is regarded "a commonplace in New Testament theology that there is no formal doctrine of Christ in the Apocalypse."¹⁸ "The Christology of the Apocalypse may evade

¹⁶Benjamin B. Warfield, The Lord of Glory (New York: American Tract Society, n.d.), p. 290.

¹⁷George Barker Stevens, The Theology of the New Testament (Second edition; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1927), p. 537.

¹⁸Beck, op. cit., pp. 254, 275. See also Sydney Cave, The Doctrine of the Person of Christ (London: Duckworth, 1952), p. 58.

analysis . . . , " Swete admits, after having attempted to present this Christology in summary and outline form.¹⁹

This lack of formulation lies in the very nature of the Book and in the immediate purpose for which it was written. But formal or informal as the Christology may be, the fact remains that it is there, centrally there in abundance, challenging the student to formulate and appreciate it.

Since the Apocalypse deals primarily with the glorified and triumphant Christ, it follows that the Christological emphasis is on His "heavenly career" as distinct from His career on earth. In this emphasis the Apocalypse stands aloof and alone. "Nowhere else in the New Testament are the personal activities of Jesus Christ present in His Church, the glories of His heavenly life, or the possibilities of His future manifestation so magnificently set forth."²⁰

Feine rightly observes:

Wenn man auf das Ganze sieht, enthaelt von allen Ntlichen Schriften die Apokalypse die meisten Aussagen ueber Jesu Herrschergewalt und Herrscherstellung.²¹

Thus, to speak of the "high Christology"²² is very much in

¹⁹Swete, op. cit., clxiii.

²⁰Ibid. See also Harold Henry Rowley, The Relevance of Apocalyptic: A Study of Jewish and Christian Apocalypses from Daniel to the Revelation (Second edition; London: Lutterworth Press, 1947), p. 134; Beck, op. cit., p. 254; Thomas, op. cit., p. 346; Charles, op. cit., I, cxi.

²¹Paul Feine, Die Religion des Neuen Testaments (Leipzig: Quelle & Meyer, 1921), p. 128.

²²Wm. H. Johnson, Who is This King of Glory? (New York: American Tract Society, c.1940), p. 72.

place, and to claim (with Baur) "that the Christology of the Apocalypse does not rise essentially above the Ebionite standpoint" requires "some amount of courage."²³

With regard to the "earthly career" of Christ we find that John "like Paul, . . . spends little time on the days of humiliation."²⁴ But to hold, as Burrows does, that "the historical Jesus is hardly recognizable in the descriptions of chs. 1:12-16; 19:11-16; and elsewhere"²⁵ is to pass by the eternal glory of the God-Man and the "epiphanies" of His "earthly career," to forget that the characterization of Christ in the Apocalypse "presupposes his earthly life."²⁶ Feine states the case quite strongly when he says: "Das Erdenleben und insbesondere die Selbsthingabe Jesu in den Tod gehoert zu den grundlegenden Elementen der Christologie der Offenbarung."²⁷ References to the earthly life of Christ are not many, to be sure, but such references are not totally absent. His descent is from the tribe of Judah and the family of David (5:5; 12:16); He is born in the midst of the Jewish theocracy (12:1-3,5). He has twelve apostles (21:14), was crucified in Jerusalem (11:8), was pierced (1:7), rose

²³van Oosterzee, op. cit., p. 409.

²⁴Beck, op. cit., p. 271.

²⁵Millar Burrows, An Outline of Biblical Theology (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1946), p. 108.

²⁶Stevens, op. cit., p. 536.

²⁷Feine, Die Religion des Neuen Testaments, p. 130.

from the dead (1:5,18) and ascended on high (3:21; 12:5). Such are the explicit references to Christ's earthly life. To this must be added the fact that the personal name "Jesus" occurs nine times for the glorious Christ, and in the New Testament this always represents the historic Person whose story is told in the Gospels.²⁸ Further, Hayes has found reminiscences of Jesus' words in the Gospels in passages of the Apocalypse. He compares 14:14-20 with Mt. 26:64, 14:15 with Mk. 13:32, 14:18 with Mt. 13:39; the "vine of the earth" in the Apocalypse with the vine and its branches of Jn. 15.²⁹ The exalted Christ of the Apocalypse "is the same person as the Jesus who lived and died on earth."³⁰

What is the relation of the Christology of the Apocalypse to that of the rest of Scripture? That the Book rests solidly on the canonical writings of the past is incontrovertible. Robertson points out:

In the appendix to the second volume of Westcott and Hort's Greek New Testament it is shown that of the 404 verses in John's Apocalypse, 278 contain references to the Old Testament. No other book of the New Testament shows such constant use of the Old Testament.³¹

Although there is no formal citation of the Old Testament,³²

²⁸Walter F. Adeney, The New Testament Doctrine of Christ (New York: Hodder and Stoughton, 1909), p. 162.

²⁹Hayes, op. cit., pp. 291-92.

³⁰Adeney, op. cit., p. 162.

³¹Robertson, Epochs in the Life of the Apostle John, p. 206.

³²Ibid. See also A. Schlatter, Einleitung in die Bibel (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlagsverein, 1889), p. 495.

"there is scarcely a symbol or figure employed that is not appropriated to some extent from the Old Testament."³³ Hayes points out that "this book has been called 'a rhetorical resume of previous Scriptures.'"³⁴ So also with reference to the New Testament, and specifically to the doctrine of Christ, the Apocalypse "furnishes no doctrine of Christ which is not warranted by some corresponding analogy in the gospels [sic]."³⁵ "Die Christologie der Apk ist also ebenfalls keine andere als die der anderen ntlichen Schriften," writes Feine.³⁶ And Warfield states that "it would not be untrue to say that the Book of Revelation, . . . gathers up into an epitome and gives vivid expression to the whole century's thought of Jesus."³⁷ The whole matter of the indebtedness of the Apocalypse to the rest of Scripture is beautifully summarized by Van Oosterzee:

An impartial survey of the doctrinal system of the Apocalypse reveals, on the one hand, how many an earlier or later objection to this book rests on a misunderstanding or a prejudice, and on the other hand, how the prospect here opened up by no means stands alone in Holy Scripture, but is, as it were, the crown of that stem whose foliage is spread forth before our eyes in the prophetic

³³Milton S. Terry, Biblical Apocalypics (New York: Eaton & Mains, c.1898), p. 255. See A. T. Robertson, Syllabus for New Testament Study (Nashville, Tennessee: The Broadman Press, c.1915), pp. 254-55 for a list of the Old Testament imagery in the Apocalypse.

³⁴Hayes, op. cit., pp. 310-11.

³⁵Terry, op. cit., p. 262.

³⁶Paul Feine, Theologie des Neuen Testaments (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1922), p. 376.

³⁷Warfield, op. cit., p. 286.

and Apostolic writings of the Old and New Testament. As streams lose themselves in the ocean, so do all the expectations of blessedness opened to us in Scripture unite in the Apocalyptic perspective; and precisely to the latest book of the New Testament the investigation as to the higher unity of the different doctrinal systems attaches itself easily, and, as it were, without any effort.³⁸

As Jesus Christ is the central Figure in the Apocalypse, the doctrine of His person and work receiving full and adequate emphasis in agreement with the rest of Scripture, so the central act of His work is His redemptive death and the central characterization of Him is in the role of Savior. It is in the light of His saving death that the Apocalypse views His heavenly actions and relationships. Feine observes:

Sieht man aber nun naeher zu, so ist es die Anschauung auch des Apokalyptikers ebenso wie wir es bei Paulus und im Hebraeerbrief fanden, dass diese Person, der Christus, gerade die Herrscherpraedikate im Grunde doch erst auf Grund und nach Ausrichtung seines Erloesungswerkes an der Menschheit erlangt hat.³⁹

Schlatter writes: "Alle Macht und That des himmlischen Christus ist mit seinem Kreuz verknuepft als die Folge und Frucht seines heiligen Opfers auf Erden."⁴⁰ We will have more to say concerning the redemptive death of Christ in the following chapter. We merely here want summarily to note that the Apocalypse distinctly emphasizes the fulfillment of Christ's redemptive work in and through His death, attaching the greatest impor-

³⁸Van Oosterzee, op. cit., p. 414.

³⁹Feine, Die Religion des Neuen Testaments, p. 129.

⁴⁰Schlatter, Einleitung in die Bibel, p. 500. See also A. Schlatter, Die Theologie des Neuen Testaments (Stuttgart: Verlag der Vereinbuchhandlung, 1910), II, 145.

tance to this death.⁴¹

To the end of expressing in symbol and in picture the supreme work of Jesus culminating in His death John uses all the resources of his art.⁴² John never calls Jesus "Savior." His symbol for the Savior in the Apocalypse is "the Lamb." The very frequency with which this title occurs,⁴³ to say nothing of the significance of this name in the entire Apocalypse demands attention. And attention it has received by almost every writer who has devoted serious study to the Book. To mention only a few, Parsons,⁴⁴ Stevens,⁴⁵ Johnson,⁴⁶ Burrows,⁴⁷ Sheldon,⁴⁸ Holtzmann,⁴⁹ Farrar,⁵⁰ Beck,⁵¹ Hayes,⁵² and many

⁴¹Henry C. Sheldon, New Testament Theology (Second edition; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1922), p. 165; Swete, op. cit., clxvii.

⁴²Preston and Hanson, op. cit., p. 32.

⁴³See List of Names, supra, pp. 11-12.

⁴⁴Parsons, op. cit., p. 164.

⁴⁵Stevens, op. cit., p. 536.

⁴⁶Johnson, op. cit., pp. 72-3.

⁴⁷Burrows, op. cit., p. 87.

⁴⁸Sheldon, op. cit., pp. 162-63.

⁴⁹Heinrich Julius Holtzmann, Lehrbuch der Neutestamentlichen Theologie (Tuebingen: Verlag von J. C. B. Mohr, 1911), I, 548.

⁵⁰Frederic W. Farrar, The Early Days of Christianity (New York: Cassell, Petter, Galpin & Co., 1882), p. 332.

⁵¹Beck, op. cit., p. 276.

⁵²Hayes, op. cit., pp. 227-28.

others have noted the significance of the recurrence of the use of the title "Lamb" for Christ. Terry outlines the entire Apocalypse with reference to the Lamb.⁵³ Schick recognizes this symbol as the Apocalypse's picture for Christ as Redeemer and Savior.⁵⁴ Feine states that the presentation of Christ as the Lamb "ist die charakteristische [Vorstellung] dieses Buches."⁵⁵ Warfield goes so far as to suggest that the Lamb

had acquired for him [the seer] much the status of a proper name [italics mine], and suggested itself as a designation of Jesus even when the mind of the writer was dwelling on other aspects of His work that [sic.] that most closely symbolized by this title.⁵⁶

Dean declares that "the real scheme of thought of the Book of Revelation requires that its conception of Him [Christ] as the Lamb that was slain should be central."⁵⁷ Ellwanger considers the use of Lamb for Jesus "the golden thread of its [the Apocalypse's] interpretation and the keynote of its understanding."⁵⁸ And Rawlinson, having discussed the refer-

⁵³Terry, op. cit., pp. 271-72.

⁵⁴Edward Schick, "Die Apokalypse," in Die Heilige Schrift in Deutscher Uebersetzung (Echter--Bibel), Das Neue Testament, herausgegeben von Karl Staab (Wuerzburg: Echter--Verlag, 1952), p. 30.

⁵⁵Feine, Die Religion des Neuen Testaments, p. 130.

⁵⁶Warfield, op. cit., pp. 290-91. See footnote 8 on p. 291 in Warfield, where he claims backing for this suggestion by Hoestra and Gebhardt. See also Beck, op. cit., p. 258; Preston and Hanson, op. cit., p. 76.

⁵⁷J. T. Dean, The Book of Revelation (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1915), p. 31.

⁵⁸Walter Ellwanger, "The Doctrine of Christ in the Apocalypse," unpublished Bachelor's Thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1928, p. 24.

ences to the Lamb in the Apocalypse, concludes by saying:

"There could be no better summary of the Christology of the Apocalypse."⁵⁹

John the Baptist had said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" John the evangelist followed Jesus and saw him live the spotless life, and die on the cross; and then in apocalyptic vision he saw him at the head of heaven's hosts and sitting on heaven's throne; and to him Jesus was the Paschal Lamb, slain for sin, saving from sin. To him heaven's King was a warring, overcoming, purifying, illuminating Lamb on the throne.⁶⁰

Indeed, Christ as the Lamb is the characteristic of the Apocalypse. Not only is He the central Figure, not only is the doctrine of His person and work fully treated, not only does His work culminate in His death; but He is central as the Lamb, as the Lamb He died, and on the basis of the Lamb passages an interesting and edifying Christology can be postulated. These latter points will receive full treatment in later chapters. A preview of what lies in store is nicely given in the words of Bernhard:

In the peculiar title [the Lamb], thus studiously employed, and illustrated by the repeated mention of the slaying and the blood, we read the doctrine, that the ground of the personal is the ground of the general salvation: that the place which the sacrifice of the death of Christ holds in the consciousness of the believer, is the same which the sacrifice of the death of Christ holds in the history of the Church, and that he conquers for us, and reigns among us, and achieves the

⁵⁹ Alfred Edward John Rawlinson, The New Testament Doctrine of the Christ (London: Longmans, Green and Co., Ltd., 1926), p. 194.

⁶⁰ Hayes, op. cit., p. 228.

restoration of all things, because he has first offered himself for us, and is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.⁶¹

Linguistic considerations regarding the Lamb, its usage in the New Testament, and its background in the Old Testament need our brief attention before we exegetically consider the Lamb passages.

Lamb (ἀρνίον) is used 28 times with reference to Christ in the Apocalypse (5:6,8,12,13; 6:1,16; 7:9,10,14,17; 12:11; 13:8; 14:1,4,4,10; 15:3; 17:14,14; 19:7,9; 21:9,14,22,23,27; 22:1,3).⁶² Elsewhere in the New Testament the word is found in John 21:15, where the plural (ἀρνία) is used of Christ's followers. This reference is, incidently, one of the two passages in the New Testament where "lamb" is employed without reference to Christ (cf. Lk. 10:3, ὡς ἀγνῶς). Christ is referred to as "Lamb" in the rest of the New Testament, though not frequently, and always under the word ἀρνός. The usage "is characteristic of the Johannine writings."⁶³ Thus, John 1:29,36, Jesus is described as "the Lamb of God" (ὁ ἀρνός τοῦ θεοῦ), in the former passage as "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." Acts 8:32 speaks of

⁶¹Thomas Dehaney Bernhard, The Progress of Doctrine in the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Zondervan Publishing House, n.d.), p. 201.

⁶²The 29th use of ἀρνίον in the Apocalypse is with reference to the second beast in 13:11: "Then I saw another beast which rose out of the earth; it had two horns like a lamb [ὄμωα ἀρνίῳ] and it spoke like a dragon."

⁶³Vincent Taylor, The Names of Jesus (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1953), p. 116.

Christ as it quotes Is. 53:7f: "As a sheep led to the slaughter or a lamb [$\acute{\alpha}\mu\nu\acute{o}\varsigma$] before its shearer is dumb, so he opens not his mouth." And in 1 Pet. 1:19 the readers are reminded that they were redeemed "with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb [$\acute{\omega}\varsigma \acute{\alpha}\mu\nu\acute{o}\upsilon$] without blemish or spot." This is the extent of the New Testament usage of "lamb" (both $\acute{\alpha}\mu\nu\acute{o}\varsigma$ and $\acute{\alpha}\rho\nu\acute{\iota}\omicron\nu$).

In answer to the question as to why $\acute{\alpha}\rho\nu\acute{\iota}\omicron\nu$ instead of $\acute{\alpha}\mu\nu\acute{o}\varsigma$ is employed in the Apocalypse Lenski offers a linguistic answer:

The oblique cases of $\acute{\alpha}\mu\nu\acute{o}\varsigma$ are seldom used, those of $\acute{\alpha}\rho\nu\acute{o}\varsigma$ being substituted, of which, in turn, the nominative was not used. Since in Revelation both the nominative and the oblique cases are required for "Lamb," neither $\acute{\alpha}\mu\nu\acute{o}\varsigma$ nor $\acute{\alpha}\rho\nu\acute{o}\varsigma$ were suitable but only $\acute{\alpha}\rho\nu\acute{\iota}\omicron\nu$ of which all cases were in use. . . . This is the reason for the employment of $\acute{\alpha}\rho\nu\acute{\iota}\omicron\nu$ in Revelation, it is merely a linguistic matter in the Greek.⁶⁴

Kiddle rightly observes that the meaning of "Lamb" is not affected by the fact that $\acute{\alpha}\rho\nu\acute{\iota}\omicron\nu$ is used in the Apocalypse, while $\acute{\alpha}\mu\nu\acute{o}\varsigma$ is used in the other New Testament citations. "In the one [the Apocalypse] as in the other [the Fourth Gospel], the Lamb's death is the means of cleansing God's people from their sins. . . ." ⁶⁵ $\acute{\alpha}\rho\nu\acute{\iota}\omicron\nu$ is, of course, diminutive in form, but this fact must not be pressed.⁶⁶

⁶⁴R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. John's Revelation (Columbus: The Wartburg Press, c.1943), p. 198.

⁶⁵Martin Kiddle and M. K. Ross, The Revelation of St. John (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, [1940], p. 98.

⁶⁶Swete, op. cit., p. 78.

Surkau agrees with this, saying of ἀρνίον: "urspruenglich eine Verkleinerungsform, deren verkleinernde Bedeutung dem NT nicht mehr gelaefig ist. . . ." ⁶⁷ And Behm definitely departs from any diminutive idea in ἀρνίον when he states:

Gedacht ist offenbar nicht an das kleine wehrlose Laemmlein . . . , vielmehr an den jungen Widder mit Hoerner (s. Dan. 8,3; Henoch--Apok. 90,9), den zeichen der Kraft und fuerstlichen Hoheit (vgl. 5. Mos. 33,17; Ps. 22,22; 75,11; Jer. 48,25). ⁶⁸

The question of the Old Testament background of "lamb" needs attention, especially in view of the fact that the symbol is introduced in the fifth chapter of the Apocalypse without explanation. Evidently its meaning was clear to John's readers without explanation. ⁶⁹ One could, of course, conjecture that he who had been led to Christ by the Baptist's words, "Behold, the Lamb of God" (Jn. 1:26,39), would have often uttered and explained this meaningful symbol to his congregations. But the question yet remains as to what Old Testament idea(s) underlie(s) this favorite Johannine

⁶⁷ Hans Werner Surkau, "Lamm Gottes," in Biblich--Theologisches Handwoerterbuch zur Lutherbibel und zu neueren Uebersetzungen, herausgegeben von Edo Osterloh und Hans Engelland (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, c.1954), p. 330.

⁶⁸ Johannes Behm, Die Offenbarung des Johannes, in Das Neue Testament Deutsch, herausgegeben von Paul Althaus (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1953), XI, 35. Bernhard Weiss, Biblical Theology of the New Testament, translated from the third revised edition of the German by David Eaton and James E. Duguid (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, n.d.), II, 273, footnote 2 appears to stand alone in holding that the diminutive is "intentionally selected."

⁶⁹ Behm, op. cit., p. 35.

title.

That the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53 was interpreted as messianic in the New Testament is evident from Acts 8: 32ff. And that Isaiah 53, especially verses 7f. ("As a sheep led to the slaughter or as a lamb before its shearer is dumb, so he opens not his mouth."), lies behind the Lamb of the Apocalypse is the general opinion of scholars.⁷⁰ Others allow a combined reference to Is. 53:7f. and the Paschal Lamb of Exodus (cf. 1 Cor. 5:7: "For Christ, our paschal lamb, has been sacrificed.").⁷¹ A possible combined reference to Is. 53:7f. and Jer. 11:19 ("But I was like a gentle lamb led to the slaughter. . . .") is held by Beck and Swete,⁷² but

⁷⁰Ragnar Leivestad, Christ the Conqueror (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1954), p. 222; Weiss op. cit., II, 273, footnote 2; G. R. Beasley--Murray, The Revelation, in The New Bible Commentary, edited by F. Davidson, A. M. Stibbs and E. F. Kevan (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1953), p. 1177; Burrows, op. cit., pp. 87-8; Warfield, op. cit., p. 291; Preston and Hanson, op. cit., p. 76; Charles, op. cit., I, 141; Holtzmann, op. cit., I, 548; A possible reference to Is. 53:7f. is admitted by Rawlinson, op. cit., pp. 192-93; Adeney, op. cit., pp. 164-65.

⁷¹Feine, Theologie des Neuen Testaments, p. 377; Schick, op. cit., p. 30; James Moffatt, "The Revelation of St. John the Divine," in The Expositor's Greek Testament, edited by W. Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1951), V, 384; Revere Franklin Weidner, Biblical Theology of the New Testament (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1891), II, 269. Weiss, op. cit., II, 273 footnote 2 denies a reference to the Paschal Lamb, and Frank C. Porter, "Book of Revelation," in A Dictionary of the Bible, edited by James Hastings (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1902), IV, 263, holds that the matter of referring the Lamb of the Apocalypse to either the Suffering Servant of Isaiah or to the Paschal Lamb, or to both, must remain uncertain.

⁷²Beck, op. cit., p. 259; Swete, op. cit., p. 78.

is denied by Moffatt.⁷³ Stevens helps us to pull this material to a satisfactory conclusion when he states:

Whether it [the designation of the Savior as the Lamb] is a reminiscence of the description of the suffering Servant of Jehovah, under the figure of a lamb, in Isa. 53:7, or points to the Passover lamb, or to the covenant offerings, or represents a combination of ideas which is no longer directly dependent on any one of these Old Testament conceptions, we cannot certainly determine. In any case "the Lamb" is a symbol of obedient and self-denying love.⁷⁴

And Kiddle writes:

It is not much to the point to discuss the original conceptions from which John derived the symbol [the Lamb]--to enquire whether he was referring to the paschal lamb in Exodus, or to the suffering lamb of Is. 53. Probably both contributed to an idea which was rich in meaning, and must, as we know from other New Testament literature, have been familiar to the churches of John's day.⁷⁵

Agreeable as it might be, we cannot as yet dismiss this subject of the background of the Lamb of the Apocalypse, for there are those who see its roots, partially at least, in Jewish Apocalyptic. Were the "Lamb standing" merely "as though it had been slain. . . ." (5:6; cf. 5:12; 12:11; 13:8, et al.), the Old Testament Lamb passages would have satisfied all as ample background. But this is a Lamb "with seven horns and with seven eyes. . . ." (5:6), who shepherds the saints (7:17), who stands amid His 144,000 as their

⁷³Moffatt, op. cit., V, 384.

⁷⁴Stevens, op. cit., p. 536.

⁷⁵Kiddle and Ross, op. cit., p. 98.

Champion (14:1), is followed by them (14:4), and conquers as "Lord of lords and King of kings" (17:14). Hence, scholars point out that the Lamb in the Apocalypse is the result of a merger of two ideas. "The Lamb is at once the triumphant Messiah, leading His people to victory, and the suffering Messiah who lays down His life for His people."⁷⁶ The former idea, it is claimed, is derived from Jewish Apocalyptic.⁷⁷ Charles has the fullest and the most authoritative presentation of the pertinent facts. He writes:

This usage [lamb as a symbol for a leader] is well attested in 1 Enoch, where, 89,45 (161 B.C.), Samuel as a leader is called a lamb, and likewise David and Solomon, 89,45.48, before they were anointed kings. All the faithful in the early Maccabean period are also called lambs, 90,6.8, but all these are without horns. In 90,9.12, however, there arise "horned lambs," and Judas Maccabaeus is such a lamb "with a great horn." Thus "the horned lamb" is a symbol for the leader of the Jewish Theocracy. But it is also used of the Messiah in 1 Enoch 90,38 and in the Test. Joseph 19,8 (109-107 B.C.), where the words, προῆλθεν ἄμνός, καὶ . . . πάντα τὰ θηρία ὄρμων κατ' αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐνίκησεν αὐτὰ ὁ ἄμνός, refer to one of the Maccabees, most probably to John Hyrcanus. Now, since the author of the Testaments regarded John Hyrcanus as the Messiah . . . , it follows that the term "lamb," or more particularly "horned lamb," was in apocalyptic writings a symbol for the Messiah. In our author the former appears in 17,14, the latter in 5,6.⁷⁸

It will be noticed that Charles makes two statements here

⁷⁶Charles, op. cit., I, cxiii.

⁷⁷Ibid., I, cxiii-cxiv; Beasley--Murray, op. cit., p. 1177; James Denney, Jesus and the Gospel (New York: A. C. Armstrong & Son, 1909), pp. 65-6; Rowley, op. cit., p. 126; Beck, op. cit., p. 258; Rawlinson, op. cit., p. 192; Parsons, op. cit., pp. 165-66.

⁷⁸Charles, op. cit., I, cxiii, footnote 2.

which are subject to question. These conjectural statements are that John Hyrcanus is "probably" referred to in Test. Joseph 19:8, and that "the author of the Testaments regarded John Hyrcanus as the Messiah. . . ." Leivestad, in an excellent book entitled Christ the Conqueror, discussing the very subject in hand, states: "Whether 'lamb' was a Jewish denomination of the Messiah is doubtful [italics mine] (cf. T. Jos. 19.8)."⁷⁹ And Surkau, recognizing the two lines of thought which merge in the Lamb of the Apocalypse, and having presented each line in the context of New Testament thought, writes:

Es kann . . . nicht eingewandt werden, dass die Gestalt des Lammes in der Offb. keine einheitliche sei, sondern einerseits das "geschlachtete Lamm," andererseits der siegende und herrschende Messias. Nichts anderes ist gerade die Predigt des ganzen NT [italics mine].⁸⁰

Before we leave the subject of the background of the Lamb of the Apocalypse, a word of Rowley, though bordering on the sarcastic, is in order. He writes:

it is more important to appreciate the spirit and purpose of the author than to trace the origins of his materials, origins of which he was probably himself much less aware than his learned modern students.⁸¹

The purpose of St. John in presenting the Lamb to the readers of the Apocalypse is to show that Jesus stands in

⁷⁹Leivestad, op. cit., p. 222, footnote.

⁸⁰Surkau, op. cit., p. 330.

⁸¹Rowley, op. cit., p. 126.

the presence of God as the One who offered Himself on the earth.⁸² The implications of this tremendous fact with reference to the person and work of Christ, and as regards His relation to God and to His followers shall concern us in the following chapters.

⁸²Schlatter, Einleitung in die Bibel, p. 500.

CHAPTER III

THE WORK AND ACTIVITIES OF THE LAMB

He is Conqueror and Executer of Wrath

The first presentation of Jesus Christ as the Lamb in the Apocalypse pictures Him, for one thing, as a powerful Lamb.

And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders, I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth; . . ." (5:6).

Throughout the Bible the horn is an emblem of power. Commentators also see a reference to "royal dignity" in the symbol of a horn, and Porter combines both ideas and speaks of "kingly power."¹ The significance of "seven" here, as throughout the Apocalypse, is to denote completeness. "The 'seven horns of the Lamb' symbolize the fulness of His power as the Victorious Christ; . . ." (cf., Mt. 18:18; Jn. 17:1).²

More subtle, perhaps, is the reference in this verse to the Lamb's power resident in His relation to the throne of God. There is difficulty in determining the relative "spatial position" of the Lamb with reference to the throne, an evident symbol

¹Frank C. Porter, "Book of Revelation," in A Dictionary of the Bible, edited by James Hastings (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1902), IV, 263. See R. E. Charles, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John, (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1920), I, 141 for a full treatment of the horn symbol and a listing of the Old Testament references.

²Henry Barclay Swete, The Apocalypse of St. John (Second edition; London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1907), p. 78.

of power.³ Swete handles the matter thus:

The position which He [the Lamb] occupies in the picture is not quite clear, for ἐν μέσῳ . . . καὶ ἐν μέσῳ may mean either "between the Throne and the Four Living creatures on the one hand and the Elders on the other" . . . , or "in the midst of all," the Centrepiece [sic.] of the whole tableau. But the relative positions of the Throne, the Ἰῶα, and the Elders (4:4,6), seem to exclude the former interpretation, and the latter is wholly consistent with the general place assigned to the Lamb throughout the Apocalypse.⁴

In favor of this interpretation Charles cites 7:17, τὸ ἄρνιον τὸ ἀνά μέσον τοῦ θρόνου; and against it, 5:7, καὶ ἦλθεν καὶ εὐλόγηεν.⁵ No doubt it is treading on thin "exegetical ice" to push the spatial implications of such an extra-sensory vision too far. Dean cautions: "The question as to spatial position is not to be pressed. The idea is a spiritual one."⁶ At any rate, according to 22:1,3 "the throne of God and of the Lamb" are one. And thus to suggest that the Lamb linked with the throne pictures Him "as eternally exalted [cf., 12:5] and powerful [italics mine]," has some ground of factuality.⁷ It ought to be said that some scholars see in this proximity of the Lamb to God's throne a reference prima-

³R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. John's Revelation (Columbus: The Wartburg Press, c.1943), passim.

⁴Swete, op. cit., p. 78.

⁵Charles, op. cit., I, 140.

⁶J. T. Dean, The Book of Revelation (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1915), p. 103.

⁷Dwight Marion Beck, "The Christology of the Apocalypse of John," in New Testament Studies, edited by Edwin Prince Booth (New York: Abingdon--Cokesbury Press, 1942), p. 260.

rily to the intercession of Christ. Reisner says: "Dieses Stehen in der Mitte ist Ausdruck fuer die Mittlerschaft Christi."⁸ Weidner also sees Christ's priestly intercession for His people in the phrase "in the midst of the throne" (7:17).⁹

The power of the Lamb indicated by His seven horns and by His relation to the throne is no inactive possession; it has been put to use. The Lamb has achieved a great victory. He is Conqueror and Victor. This fact is strikingly presented in 5:5, where reference is made to the conquering Lion.

Then one of the elders said to me [John], "Weep not; lo, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered [$\epsilon\nu\acute{\iota}\kappa\eta\sigma\epsilon\nu$, standing in the emphatic position], so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals."

When we recall that in the following verse (5:6) John beholds not a Lion, but a Lamb, we are confronted with the most tremendous paradox imaginable--the Lion a Lamb! "The paradoxical nature of the victory of Christ is nowhere more strikingly portrayed. . . ."¹⁰ Commentators note this fact and discuss its significance and implications; but no one, perhaps, states the tremendous import of this paradox better than does Behm, who writes:

⁸Erwin Reisner, Das Buch mit den Sieben Siegeln (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1949), p. 57.

⁹Revere Franklin Weidner, Biblical Theology of the New Testament (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1891), II, 270.

¹⁰Ragnar Leivestad, Christ the Conqueror (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1954), p. 221.

Der ungeheure Widersinn, auf dem das Christentum beruht, den Jesus in den Satz vom Gewinnen des Lebens durch Verlieren (s. Mk. 8:35ff. u. Par.) und Paulus in das Wort "Kreuz" fasste, praegt sich dem Johannes aus in diesem Bilde: der Loewe ein Lamm; der Fuerst des Lebens, der Gottes letzten Willen geschichtsmaechtig vollstrecken soll, ein Opfertier, das noch das Mal seiner Toetung am Halse traegt (so ist der der Offb. eigentuemliche Ausdruck "das gleichsam geschlachtete Lamm," der hier zum erstenmal vorkommt, zu verstehen)!¹¹

The contrast of images (Lion--Lamb) is certainly intentional. The ground of the Lamb's power lies in His nature as the Lion; the means of the Lion's victory lies in the fact that as Lamb He died the sacrificial death to achieve this victory.¹² The image strains our imagination; its import challenges out intellect--but such is the Divine plan. And to consider the Lion--Lamb in a "coherent sense,"¹³--to see sacrifice and victory merged together here,¹⁴ is an oversimplification, but one which will stand the test of the text, and one which the Church admirably illustrates by the traditional symbol of the Lamb and flag. But to hold, as Porter does, that lion-like rather than lamb-like qualities remain dominant in the characterization of Christ throughout the Apocalypse, is to miss the point of the paradox, to completely ignore the fact that only because Christ was true to His character as

¹¹Johannes Behm, Die Offenbarung des Johannes, in Das Neue Testament Deutsch, herausgegeben von Paul Althaus (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1953), XI, 35.

¹²Thomas Dehaney Bernhard, The Progress of Doctrine in the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, n.d.), p. 200, footnote.

¹³Beck, op. cit., p. 259.

¹⁴

Leivestad, op. cit., p. 222.

Lamb that He can be called the Lion and that He achieved and achieves the victory.¹⁵

The powerful Lamb has thus achieved a victory, He has conquered (5:5, ἔνικησεν). The verb stands alone without a predicate. "Most commentators supply death and devil as its objects."¹⁶ A detailed discussion of the implied object(s) of ἔνικησεν need not detain us here, for, as Beck rightly observes: "When enemies are considered, John usually prefers other designations than the Lamb."¹⁷ Suffice it to say that the Lion--Lamb conquers death, hades, the dragon, the beasts, the false prophet, the men who worship the beast, etc.--sin, that which is opposed to God, in its every manifestation.

In consequence of the sacrificial victory of the Lamb He, and He alone (not even God Himself!), is worthy to take and to open the seven-sealed scroll. We quote the dramatic passage in full:

And I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals; and I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?" And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it, and I wept much that no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. Then one of the elders said to me, "Weep not; lo, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals." And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders, I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been

¹⁵Porter, op. cit., p. 263.

¹⁶Leivestad, op. cit., p. 222.

¹⁷Beck, op. cit., p. 265.

slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth; and he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne (5:1-7).

The circumstances that the Lamb is entrusted with the scroll and that it is He who successively breaks its seals (6:1-17; 8:1) signify that it is He who is now the Executer of the designs of God.¹⁸ Most scholars are rather vague in designating these "designs of God." The non-committal statement of Stevens, "The Messiah alone holds the key to the future; he alone can unlock the mystery of providence,"¹⁹ is characteristic of this vagueness with which many writers handle the significance of the scroll vision. Specifically we ask: Is the saving or the condemning will of God designated here? Or both? Feine speaks of "das Gericht";²⁰ Schlatter of "das Urteil Gottes ueber die Welt";²¹ Leivestad of "the divine verdict."²² On the other hand, Behm speaks of "den abschliessenden Heilswillen Gottes";²³ and many other commentators allow the saving will of God a prominent place in the unrolling of the

¹⁸F. Godet, Studies on the New Testament, edited by W. H. Lyttelton (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1876), p. 307.

¹⁹George Barker Stevens, The Theology of the New Testament (Second edition; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1927), p. 530. Stevens later makes a definite statement on the matter (p. 560), speaking of both salvation and judgment.

²⁰Paul Feine, Die Religion des Neuen Testaments (Leipzig: Quelle & Meyer, 1921), p. 131.

²¹A. Schlatter, Die Theologie des Neuen Testaments (Stuttgart: Verlag der Vereinbuchhandlung, 1922), II, 146.

²²Leivestad, op. cit., p. 223.

²³Behm, op. cit., p. 34.

scroll.²⁴ Although the opening of the second to sixth seals (6:3-17) results in judgments (and the opening of the eighth in 8:1 prepares for the judgments announced under the seven trumpets), the opening of the first seal (6:1-2) pictures a white horse, whose rider is armed with a bow, and adorned with a victor's crown, concerning which Godet, among many others, holds: "This is an emblem of the gospel, which, through the instrumentality of preaching, is about to extend itself victoriously through the earth."²⁵ Thus to see the Lamb with the scroll at His disposal in the role of both Savior and Judge is no doubt most nearly correct.²⁶

But let this observation not detract from the fact that the Lamb is the Executer of Divine wrath, that the condemning will of God has His full approval. This truth is manifestly set forth under the opening of the sixth seal.

Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the generals and the rich and the strong, and every one, slave and free, hid in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, calling to the mountains and rocks, "fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand before it?" (6:15-17)

That the Lamb (a figure which connotes gentleness, even though

²⁴Reisner, op. cit., p. 55 appears to stand alone in holding that the scroll is probably the book of life, often alluded to in the Apocalypse.

²⁵Godet, op. cit., p. 307.

²⁶James E. Bear, "The Revelation," in Understanding the Books of the New Testament, edited by Patrick H. Carmichael (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, c.1952), p. 192.

this may not be its primary connotation) possesses wrath is a paradox, to be sure. But such paradoxes do not offend St. John nor his theology; the Apocalypse is replete with paradoxes. Swete's comment on 6:15-17 well suits our purposes. He writes:

The words ἀπὸ τῆς ὀργῆς τοῦ ἀρνίου are pregnant with the grave irony which has already shewn [sic.] itself in 5:5f. ἰδοὺ . . . ὁ λεων . . . καὶ εἶδον . . . ἀρνίον . . . But the situation is now reversed. The Lion standing before the Throne is the Lamb; the Lamb in the great day of His appearing is once more the Lion, in the terrible-ness of His wrath. In the Gospels ὀργή is attributed to Christ once only (Mc. 3:5, . . .), but His stern denunciations of the Pharisees (Mt. 23:14ff.) and His stern predictions of the doom of the impenitent make it evident that the Sacred Humanity is capable of a righteous anger which is the worst punishment that the ungodly have to fear, more insupportable even than the vision of the Divine Purity.²⁷

The fact that the Lamb can execute wrath in true conformity with His character as Lion-Lamb, Savior--Judge, is further attested by 14:10, where the Lamb explicitly approves the final punishment of the wicked. The verse reads:

he [the worshiper of the beast and its image] also shall drink the wine of God's wrath, poured unmixed into the cup of his anger, and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.

The evident meaning of the verse is that angels and the Lamb acquiesce in the perfect justice and the necessity of God's awful judgments.²⁸ Plummer comments:

The punishment is in the presence of the angels and of

²⁷Swete, op. cit., p. 95.

²⁸Lenski, op. cit., p. 438.

the Lamb; that is, probably, the purity and bliss of heaven is visible to the wicked, and the sight of it, combined with the knowledge of its inaccessibility to themselves, is part of their torment (cf., Luke 16:23).²⁹

To this Swete pointedly adds: "The *πάραυτιμός* [torment] is aggravated . . . by the presence of the Lord Who died for the sins of men and has been denied and rejected by these sufferers."³⁰

The powerful Lamb has achieved the victory over sin by His sacrificial death. In consequence of this victory He now mediates the Divine plan with reference to the world of men, effecting salvation and executing wrath. The fact that He will "have the last word" in regard to the fate of His enemies at the end of this aeon is implicit in the passage (14:10) picturing the torment of hell treated above. This fact is further attested in the supreme claim to power resident in the Lamb's title: "Lord of lords and King of kings." The scene in which the title occurs is that of the great battle of Armageddon (16:12-16); the forces of evil have gathered against the Lamb and His forces; and "they [specifically the ten kings of v.12] will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, . . ." (17:14; cf. 19:11-21). "The prince of this world" has his "little season" in which to exercise his dominion and power; his defeat was

²⁹A. Plummer, T. Randell and A. T. Bott, Revelation, in The Pulpit Commentary, edited by H. D. M. Spence and Joseph S. Excell (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, n.d.), LI, 349.

³⁰Swete, op. cit., p. 185.

accomplished on Golgatha; his days are now numbered and his fate is assured, for his Opponent is the Lamb who died to conquer sin, death, and Satan, and his Opponent is the "Lord of lords and King of kings"--"the Lamb . . . , is Lord of lords and King of kings." The close relation between the victorious sacrifice on the cross and the final triumph could not be more paradoxically or tersely stated.³¹

He is Redeemer

In the prophecy of Israel concerning his son Judah the patriarch had said: "Judah is a lion's whelp; . . ." (Gen. 49:9; cf., vv.8-12). St. John finds the fulfillment of this prophecy most apropos for an elder to speak to him in his sorrow over the sealed scroll: "Then one of the elders said to me, 'Weep not; lo, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, . . . has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals'" (5:5). Judah's greater Son had come and had won the predicted victory of Judah. The human descent of Christ is further stressed when the elder adds: "'the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals'" (5:5). Here is the "shoot from the stump of Jesse, . . ." (Is. 11:1), "the root of Jesse . . ." (Is. 11:10). He who was to come from the

³¹Leivestad, *op. cit.*, p. 233. Lenski, *op. cit.*, p. 509 appears to stand alone in conjecturing that the "lords" and "kings" over which the Lamb is "Lord" and "King" are the saints. The conjecture appears to have little to commend it.

line of Judah and from the family of David, the true Deliverer, has appeared and has accomplished the promised deliverance, the redemption of Israel, through His death as the Lamb.³²

The victory aspect of this deliverance, the Lion--Lamb antithesis and equation, we have already considered.³³ Three consequences of the Lamb's death are noted by Schlatter. Because the Lamb was slain, He is worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals (5:9). Because He was slain, He receives praise from all creatures in heaven and in earth and under the earth (5:9-14). Lastly, and most important, because He was slain, men were ransomed for God (5:9).³⁴ It is this third consequence of the Lamb's death which shall concern us in this section.

The scene which introduces the Lamb and begins the heavenly drama (chap. 5) pictures Him not with a victor's crown and a warrior's equipment, but with a wound! "I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, . . ." (5:6). As Jesus had pointed His doubting disciple to the prints of the nails and the gash of the spear (Jn. 20:25-27), so St. John, and the entire company of heaven, see the wound of the Lamb.³⁵ The evidence of His past suffering is eternally present. "In the

³²Swete, op. cit., p. 77.

³³Supra, pp. 31-3.

³⁴Schlatter, Die Theologie des Neuen Testaments, II, 145.

³⁵Charles Augustus Briggs, The Messiah of the Apostles (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1895), p. 401.

midst of heavenly glory Christ crucified [italics mine] is still the prominent object.³⁶ The wound tells of a past act; the Lamb is not about to be sacrificed in heaven, as Porter holds.³⁷ The Lamb was sacrificed; He has suffered a violent death. His life was given vicariously; His blood was shed as a ransom.

"No book of the Bible is more thoroughly saturated with the idea of redemption by the blood of the Lamb of God than the Apocalypse," writes Osborn.³⁸ The blood of the Lamb is spoken of in 5:9; 7:14; 12:11; cf., 1:5. The doctrine of redemption by the shed blood of the Lamb was not revolting to St. John. Saints sing of it and angels speak of it.³⁹ Two functions of the shed blood are apparent in the Apocalypse. The one is the blood as ransom; the other, the cleansing power of the blood. The one is the objective aspect of the atonement; the other the subjective aspect.

A close parallel to the Savior's own ransom saying (Mt. 20:28) is implicit in the *ἡγόραγας* of the doxology of the living creatures and the elders. "Worthy art thou to take the

³⁶A. R. Fausset, "The Revelation of St. John the Divine," in A Commentary, Critical and Explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments, Vol. II The New Testament (Hartford: The S. S. Scranton Co., n.d.), p. 566.

³⁷Porter, op. cit., p. 263.

³⁸Thomas Osborn, The Lion and the Lamb (New York: The Abingdon Press, c.1922), p. 168.

³⁹Doremus Almy Hayes, John and His Writings (New York: The Methodist Book Concern, c.1917), p. 307.

scroll and to open its seals, for thou wast slain and by thy blood didst ransom [ἡγόρασας] men for God . . ." (5:9). The significant verb of purchase is repeated in the narrative of the Lamb with His 144,000 on Mount Zion:

No one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who had been redeemed [οἱ ἡγορασμένοι], from the earth . . . these have been redeemed [ἡγοράσθησαν] from mankind as first fruits for God and the Lamb, . . . (14:3-4).

"ἀγοράζειν expresses the idea of salvation as one of purchase."⁴⁰ It is a Pauline word, used by the Apostle in 1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23, and in its compound ἔξαγοράζειν in Gal. 3:13; 4:5. St. Peter employs it in 2 Pet. 2:1. These references, together with the three occurrences of the verb in the Apocalypse (5:9; 14:3-4), exhaust its New Testament usage.⁴¹ "The power or sphere from which the purchase sets free is not mentioned here [5:9]."⁴² Although to supply sin and Satan, as do Weiss and Plummer,⁴³ among others, is certainly in order. In his discussion on the ransom in 5:9 Behm most appropriately quotes Luther: "erworben, gewonnen von allen Sunden, vom Tod und von der Gewalt des Teufels . . . , auf dass ich sein eigen sei."⁴⁴

⁴⁰Charles, op. cit., I, 147.

⁴¹Swete, op. cit., p. 81.

⁴²Charles, op. cit., I, 147.

⁴³Bernhard Weiss, Biblical Theology of the New Testament, translated from the third revised edition of the German by David Eaton and James E. Duguid (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, n.d.), II, 274; Plummer, op. cit., p. 166.

⁴⁴Behm, op. cit., pp. 36-7.

The price of the ransom is the shed blood of the Lamb: "by thy blood [$\hat{\epsilon}\nu\ \tau\hat{\omega}\ \alpha\acute{\iota}\mu\alpha\tau\iota\ \sigma\omicron\upsilon$] didst ransom men for God" (5:9). The $\hat{\epsilon}\nu$ is equivalent to the Hebrew ל of price, and would best be rendered: "at the cost of thy blood."⁴⁵ The goal of the ransom is implied in "for God" (5:9; cf., v. 10). The men whom God made for His glory are enabled by the ransom to give God His due glory.⁴⁶

Although 1:5 is not a Lamb passage, its basic ransom idea requires that we at least quote it in passing. The section of the verse which concerns us is a doxology of St. John to the Christ. "To him who loves us and has freed [$\lambda\acute{\upsilon}\theta\alpha\nu\tau\epsilon$] us from our sins by his blood $\hat{\epsilon}\nu\ \tau\hat{\omega}\ \alpha\acute{\iota}\mu\alpha\tau\iota\ \alpha\upsilon\tau\hat{\omega}\nu$. . ." (1:5). The close parallel of these words to the ransom passages we have considered is evident.

When the benefits of the Ransomer are applied to individual men the blood of the ransom exercises its personal cleansing capacity. Thus the great multitude of chapter seven "are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (7:14; cf., v.9; 19:8; 22:14). Speaking of the blood-redemption and referring to 7:14, Feine comments: "Die subjektive Aneignung geschieht, indem man im Blute Christi die

⁴⁵Charles, op. cit., I, 147.

⁴⁶Martin Kiddle and M. K. Ross, The Revelation of St. John (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, [1940], p. 103.

Kleider waescht and sie rein macht."⁴⁷ An excellent observation of Schlatter on this subjective aspect of the redemption closes this section of our chapter. Schlatter writes:

Die Wegnahme der Schuld von der Gemeinde wird nicht durch den Rechtfertigungs- sondern durch den Reinigungsgedanken ausgesprochen. Der Christus waescht im Evangelium die Juenger, macht im Brief durch sein Blut die Gemeinde rein und verschafft ihr in der Apokalypse durch sein Blut das reine Gewand.⁴⁸

He is Dispenser of Life

"Outside the word for 'deity' no word in human speech signifies so much as the one for 'life,'" writes Osborn. Life holds a prominent position in the Apocalypse. Words for "life" occur in it once to every seven verses, according to Osborn. John may thus be called the Apostle of Life as well as of Love, and the Apocalypse of his hand, the Book of Life.⁴⁹

One reference to life, in its spiritual connotation, occurs in 3:1 (and every scene of heavenly bliss presupposes that the participants are alive, and spiritually so), but references to Christ as alive abound (1:5,17,18; 2:8; 3:14; 21:6; 22:13). An apt illustration of the "aliveness" of Christ in a Lamb passage is that fact that although He was

⁴⁷Paul Feine, Theologie des Neuen Testaments (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1922), p. 377.

⁴⁸Schlatter, Die Theologie des Neuen Testaments, II, 146. The active voice of the washing and whitening process will receive attention later, infra, pp. 66-9.

⁴⁹Osborn, op. cit., p. 148. No doubt Osborn is thinking of "life" in its broadest sense, as including all spiritual benefits.

slain, and still bears the wound of His sacrifice, He is "standing" in 5:6, and in every succeeding description of and reference to the Lamb He is living and acting.

The organic connection between Christ's redeeming death as the Lamb and the effects of His death for men we have noted, especially in the foregoing section of this chapter.⁵⁰ Such an explicit connection between Christ the Life (Jn. 14:6), together with the life He won for men by His death, and the application of this life to men does not occur in the Apocalypse. There is, however, a somewhat tenuous connection between the living Christ and the living saint implicit in the figures of water of life and the book of life as these are related to the Lamb and to men. We propose to consider these two figures in this section.

In 13:8 those who will worship the beast from the earth are described as "every one whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that was slain."⁵¹ And in 21:27, describing those who will find entrance into the Heavenly City, St. John says: "But nothing unclean shall enter it, nor any one who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life." The book of life is also referred to in 3:5; 17:8; 20:12,15, but is not directly connected with

⁵⁰ Supra, pp. 40-3.

⁵¹ The question as to whether ἀπὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου goes with ἐσφαγμένον or with γέγραπται will be discussed later, infra, p. 78.

the Lamb in these passages. The idea of a book, or books, with the names of God's elect, or a record of the deeds of men which shall determine their destiny at the judgment, is a very common one in Scripture (cf., Ex. 32:32f.; Ps. 69:29; Dan. 12:1; Lk. 10:20; Phil. 4:3; Heb. 12:23).⁵² One's name is written on the book of Life at his regeneration. The life which he now possesses by faith (Jn. 3:15-16) is in anticipation of the full life of eternity which he shall possess on the far side of death's door.⁵³ Such life, now and forever (unless it be willfully lost, cf., 3:5), is possible only because the Lamb was slain. As Plummer pointedly remarks: "It is 'the book of life of the Lamb,' because it is through 'the Lamb' that there exists a 'book of life' for men."⁵⁴

Those whose entry in the book of life has granted them passage through the door of death and entrance into the kingdom of glory there enjoy the water of life. In picturing the great multitude of the redeemed and describing their Divine care, St. John writes: "For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water . . ." (7:17). In the Heavenly City John is shown "the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb . . ."

⁵²Isborn T. Beckwith, The Apocalypse of John (New York: The Macmillan Company, c.1919), p. 476.

⁵³Lenski, op. cit., pp. 134-35.

⁵⁴Plummer, op. cit., p. 333.

. (22:1). The water of life is further referred to in 21:6; 22:17, but without reference to the Lamb. The spiritual need of men, their yearning for communion with God (cf., Is. 55:1; Ps. 42:1f.; 63:1) has been met in Christ, who offers water which quenches eternally (Jn. 4:14), and such communion is fully realized in eternity, for this symbol of "living water" and "water of life" points to "die Fuelle des Heils . . . , die in der Stadt Gottes vorhanden ist" ⁵⁵ It is noteworthy "that even in heaven all the blessed are dependent on the Lamb for life." ⁵⁶

Swete would have us connect the action of the Holy Spirit on the personal life with this symbolism of the water of life and living water of the Lamb. ⁵⁷ Lenski effectively refutes such a claim, maintaining the connection between Christ and life. He writes:

The claim that there is an association of the Spirit with water, say because of baptism, overlooks the strong Biblical connection of life with Christ who declares, "I am the life" (John 14:6; 11:25); who is the Bread of life (John 6:26, etc., the entire discourse); who is called "the Prince of life" (Acts 3:15); of whom 1 John 5:20 says, "This is the genuine (ἀληθινός) God and life eternal," and in v.12, "The one having the Son has the life; the one not having the Son of God does not have the life." ⁵⁸

Thus this chapter--The Work and Activities of the

⁵⁵Behm, op. cit., p. 110.

⁵⁶Lenski, op. cit., p. 265.

⁵⁷Swete, op. cit., clxiv.

⁵⁸Lenski, op. cit., p. 649.

Lamb--reaches its conclusion. It is the Lamb who played and plays and will play the role of militant Conqueror in God's plan. The victory was decisively won on Calvary, but the conflict continues throughout this aeon of sin and death and the devil; its outcome is, however, eternally assured as the Lamb executes both the intervening and the final wrath upon sin in its human and diabolical manifestations. It is the Lamb who achieved the title of Redeemer by laying down His life as a ransom in behalf of men. It is the Lamb who died, but now is alive for evermore (1:18), who dispenses life to men. With the exception of the two facts that God the Father also executes wrath (cf., 6:16-17; 11:18; 14:10,19; 15:1,7; 16:1,19; 19:15) and that He too is the Source of life (cf., 22:1), the triple work of Conqueror, Redeemer, and Life-Giver is uniquely the Son's, the Lamb's, activity.

The Spirit and the Four Living Creatures
 In the vision, I saw a Lamb standing, as though
 it had been slain, with seven horns and seven eyes,
 which are the seven spirits of God sent out unto
 all the earth. . . . (Rev., 5:6)

These "seven eyes" and "seven spirits." These "living crea-
 tures," "the four beasts," "cherubim," "seraphim,"
 and other ecclesiastical applications are frequently found.

James Bevel, *Jesus and the Church* (New York: A. W.
 Messinger & Son, 1907), p. 87.

CHAPTER IV

THE TRINITARIAN RELATIONSHIP OF THE LAMB

"For the writer of the Apocalypse, and for the faith by which he lives, Jesus Christ belongs to the sphere of the divine," writes Denney, thus stating the subject and goal of this chapter for us.¹ We shall consider the relation of the Lamb to the Holy Spirit and to God the Father, the latter commonly designated simply as "God" in the Apocalypse.

The Relation of the Lamb to the Holy Spirit

Although references to the Holy Spirit are not infrequent in the Apocalypse (cf., 1:4; 2:7,11,29; 3:1,6,13,22; 4:5; 5:6; 14:13; 22:17), only one of these speaks of the relation between the Spirit and the Lamb.

And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders, I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth; . . ." (5:6; cf., 3:1).

Many commentators are quite vague in defining and identifying these "seven eyes" and "seven spirits." Thus "divine knowledge," "the pneumatic virtue," "leadership," "omniscience," and other noncommittal explanations are frequently found.

¹James Denney, Jesus and the Gospel (New York: A. C. Armstrong & Son, 1909), p. 67.

Commenting on 3:1; 4:5; 5:6, Plummer states the import clearly when he writes:

The Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, with his sevenfold gifts, is indicated by these symbols of illumination. For he illuminates and makes brighter those in whom he dwells, and renders clearer to them those things outside themselves, and enables them more fully to appreciate the manifold wisdom of God.²

The symbolic use of the number seven, so frequent in the Apocalypse, is here "the expression of that perfection which results from unity amid diversity--John's way of conceiving the one Spirit working in manifold ways."³ The fitness of the number seven is noted by Swete, who points out:

each of the seven Churches [chaps. 1-3] has its own *μερίκιός* of the Spirit; only to the Christ and to the whole body of the Church considered in its unity belongs the fulness of the spiritual powers and gifts, the septiformia Spiritus Who is in His essence indivisible.⁴

Speaking to the facts that in 4:5 the "seven spirits" belong to God and that in the passage under our consideration (5:6) they belong to Christ, Hadorn remarks:

Wenn nun auch 4,5 der Geist dem Vater gehoert und nach 5,6 auch dem Christus eignet, ebenso von ihm in alle Lande ausgesandt wird, so ist damit die Einheit des Vaters und des Sohnes im Geiste gegeben, der mit recht

²A. Plummer, T. Randell and A. T. Bott, Revelation, in The Pulpit Commentary, edited by H. D. M. Spence and Joseph S. Excell (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, n.d.), LI, 165.

³Henry C. Vedder, The Johannine Writings and the Johannine Problem (Chicago: The Griffith & Rowland Press, c.1917), p. 25.

⁴Henry Barclay Swete, The Apocalypse of St. John (Second edition; London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1907), clxiv.

der Geist des Vaters und des Sohnes heisset.⁵

Thus the unity of the Spirit with God and Christ is a distinct doctrine of the Apocalypse.

Charles would take us to task for the definite doctrine of the Holy Spirit which we have briefly set forth above. After considering the boldly trinitarian import of 1:4 the work of a later editor, he feels free to state: "There is no definitely conceived doctrine of the Spirit in our author."⁶ Kiddle is of much the same opinion, stating the 5:6 "does not prove that John regarded the seven spirits as the Holy Spirit in the developed sense used in the Fourth Gospel."⁷ We prefer the reverent, and yet tenable, comment of Swete: "It is impossible not to recognize here [5:6] the mission of the Paraclete, who is at once the Spirit of Christ, and the Spirit sent by Him from the Father to the Church."⁸ To be sure, the creedal clarity regarding the Trinity of a later century is not explicit in the Apocalypse, but it is implicit. Beckwith speaks of this matter when he writes:

The Apocalyptist does not feel difficulty in a certain

⁵W. Hadorn, Die Offenbarung des Johannes, in Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament mit Text und Paraphrase, bearbeitet von Paul Althaus und anderen (Leipzig: A Deichertsche Verlagsbuchhandlung D. Werner Scholl, 1928), XVIII, 77-8.

⁶R. H. Charles, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1920), I, cxiv.

⁷Martin Kiddle and M. K. Ross, The Revelation of St. John (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, [1940]), p. 100.

⁸Swete, op. cit., clxiv.

personalizing of the Spirit, as distinct from God and Christ, while holding to the unity of God; the relation of his conception of God, Christ, and the Spirit to one another and to the oneness of the divine being presented no problem to his thought, or the thought of that age; it is inconceivable that he should have viewed the Father, the Son, and the Spirit as three distinct and coordinate Gods; it is equally clear that he placed Christ and the Spirit in an order above the highest angelic beings, above all created existences. These truths of religious faith which the Apocalyptist held singly, without the consciousness that there was needed a principle of unity, took form subsequently, when the Church entered upon the task of more precise theological statement, in the doctrine of the three persons in the unity of the Godhead.⁹

The Relation of the Lamb to God

The Apocalypse is replete with references to the essential deity of Christ. The usual listing of proofs for Christ's deity as presented in the Apocalypse is as follows:

- a. He possesses divine knowledge;
- b. and divine power.
- c. He receives divine honor.
- d. He is joined with God, so that with God He is spoken of as one.
- e. He shares also in part the divine titles.
- f. The imagery of the Old Testament which is used to describe the revelation of God is transferred by St. John to Christ.¹⁰

The Lamb passages do not, of course, comprehend all of the above points of significant contact between God and Christ.

⁹Isborn T. Beckwith, The Apocalypse of John (New York: The Macmillan Company, c.1919), p. 317.

¹⁰B. F. Westcott, The Gospel According to St. John (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1881), lxxxvii.

But they do contain numerous ascriptions of function and possession common to both God and the Lamb and they let divine praise be given to both.

Both God and the Lamb share a common possession in the "seven eyes" (5:6), to which we have already referred in connection with the relation of the Lamb to the Holy Spirit.¹¹ In 4:5 (cf., Zech. 4:10) the seven eyes representing the seven spirits, a symbol of the Holy Spirit, belong to God. In 5:6 they belong to the Lamb. Further, both God and the Lamb share the title "King of kings and Lord of lords." In 1 Tim. 6:15 St. Paul ascribes the title to God, and as we have already noted,¹² 17:14 (cf., 19:16) assigns the title to the Lamb.

Although 11:18; 14:10,19; 15:1,7; 16:1,19; 19:15 speak of the wrath of God, 6:16-17 speaks of the wrath common to both God and the Lamb. Under the opening of the sixth seal the unbelievers cry to the mountains and rocks:

Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne [God], and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath [*τῆς ὀργῆς αὐτῶν*] has come, and who can stand before it?¹³

A similar common ascription appears with reference to salvation. In 12:10 and 19:1, both of which are in doxological contexts, salvation is ascribed to God. In 7:10 the

¹¹Supra, pp. 48-51.

¹²Supra, pp. 37-8.

¹³Supra, pp. 35-6, where the passage is discussed in connection with the Lamb as Executer of wrath.

great multitude standing before the throne and before the Lamb loudly sing the doxology of salvation: "'Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb!'"

"To cry Ἡ βωτηρία τῷ θεῷ καὶ τῷ ἀρνίῳ is equivalent to attributing to Both the title of ζῶτήρ. . . ."¹⁴

Further, God and the Lamb share a common throne in the Heavenly City.

Then he [an angel] showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb. . . . There shall no more be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it [the Heavenly City], . . ."¹⁵ (22:1,3).

We have already noted that elsewhere the Lamb is ἐν μέσῳ (5:6) or ἀνὰ μέσον τοῦ θρόνου (7:17).¹⁵ In 3:21 "the glorified Christ is represented as the Father's σύνθρονος, . . ."¹⁶ Here (22:1,3) the throne of God and the Lamb is definitely one--"God and the Lamb are one."¹⁷

Several points of contact between God and the Lamb are to be found in contexts which refer to the saints who have conquered. Thus in 7:15-17 both God and the Lamb take part in caring for those who have come out of the great tribulation.

Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits upon the throne will shelter them with his presence. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; the sun

¹⁴Swete, op. cit., p. 101. Cf., 1 Tim. 1:1; 2:3; Tit. 1:3; 3:4 & Tit. 1:4; 2:13; 3:6.

¹⁵Supra, pp. 29-31.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 298.

¹⁷Plummer, op. cit., p. 545.

shall not smite them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water; and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

When John beholds the Lamb together with His 144,000 on Mount Zion, he notes that they "had his [the Lamb's] name and his Father's name written on their foreheads" (14:1; cf., 22:4).

In the same context St. John describes these saints in the words: "these have been redeemed from mankind as first fruits for God and the Lamb, . . ." (14:4). With regard to the Heavenly City, both God and the Lamb are its temple (21:22), and both God and the Lamb are its light (21:23; cf., 22:5). "The close association of God and the Lamb is constant in the vision of the heavenly Jerusalem."¹⁸

A curious grammatical combination of God and the Lamb is presented in 22:3-4:

There shall no more be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his [αὐτοῦ] servants shall worship him [αὐτῷ]; they shall see his [αὐτοῦ] face, and his [αὐτοῦ] name shall be on their foreheads.

Notice that God and the Lamb are mentioned, but the sentence continues with the singular (αὐτοῦ and αὐτῷ). Beckwith believes the singular refers to God.¹⁹ Others take the singular as referring to the Lamb, or pass over the obvious difficulty, or rather, the obvious testimony to the deity of the Lamb. Lenski commits himself on the matter and nicely pulls the

¹⁸Ernest William Parsons, The Religion of the New Testament (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, c.1939), p. 168.

¹⁹Beckwith, op. cit., p. 766.

strands of this and the foregoing paragraph together for us. He writes in connection with 22:5: "the Lord God will be their light,":

In 21:23 the light is also the Lamb's. So in 22:3 God and the Lamb are joined on the throne. When in v.3 the face is the Lamb's, and now the light is the Lord God's, it is rather plain that the old expression of the dogmaticians applies, the opera ad extra sunt communa sive indivisa, God and the Lamb do not exclude one another"[!].²⁰

The Apocalypse resounds with paeans of praise and doxologies. The living creatures, the elders, the angels, the saints in glory and the saints on earth, and every creature join in this recurring worship. The object of this worship is God and Christ. No creature is ever worshiped, and when St. John would twice have worshiped an angel, he was twice forbidden (19:10; 22:8-9). Doxologies to God (4:8-11; 7:12; 11:16-18; 15:3-4; 16:6-7; 19:1-7), to both God and Christ (5:13-14; 7:10; 12:10-12; 14:2-3), specifically to God and the Lamb (5:13-14; 7:10), and to the Lamb alone (5:8-10,12; cf., 1:5-6) --all of these occur. Our purposes do not require that we enter upon a detailed discussion and comparison of these doxologies. Suffice it to say, that the doxology to the Lamb in 5:12, which ascribes to Him "power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing," and the doxology to God in 7:12, which ascribes to Him "Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and

²⁰R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. John's Revelation (Columbus: The Wartburg Press, c.1943), p. 654.

might," compare favorably well. The order of the seven terms differs, but Lenski believes this to be without significance.²¹ Six terms occur in both doxologies, but why the seventh is "wealth" in 5:12 and "thanksgiving" in 7:12 is subject to conjecture, but probably not to explanation. Having discussed 7:12; 5:12; 1:6; 7:10, Weidner correctly states: "Throughout the book the reverence paid to Christ is divine--such as can only be paid to God."²² So also Schlatter:

Kein menschlicher Bote Gottes ist irgendwie neben Jesus gestellt, auch kein himmlischer Geist. Er steht ueber allen beim Vater, mit dem er regiert und die Anbetung empfaengt.²³

Thus everything short of the application of the title "God" is employed in the Apocalypse in an effort to portray Christ, the Lamb, as a Divine Being. Those who are set upon having the Apocalypse witness to a "lower Christology" are those who refuse to take its language at its face value.²⁴ Having discussed some of the many passages in the Apocalypse which testify to the Divine Nature of Christ, Beckwith writes:

It is not necessary to add further illustration of the divine nature attributed to him [Christ] by the Apocalypticist. In some instances the writer might seem to identify Christ with God without difference of person; and for the most part in the representations mentioned

²¹Ibid., p. 259.

²²Revere Franklin Weidner, Biblical Theology of the New Testament (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1891), II, 268.

²³A. Schlatter, Die Theologie des Neuen Testaments (Stuttgart: Verlag der Vereinbuchhandlung, 1922), II, 144.

²⁴Benjamin B. Warfield, The Lord of Glory (New York: American Tract Society, n.d.), p. 294.

above the idea of a "subordination" of the Son to the Father seems to be absent. But it is certain that the author does not confuse the person of Christ with the person of God, and equally certain that no Jewish or Christian writer thinks of a plurality of Gods.²⁵

But Beckwith continues with the statement:

On the other hand there is a second class of passages which must be brought into comparison with those given above, if we are to gain a full view of the Apocalyptic's Christology.²⁶

It is this "second class of passages" which we will now briefly consider. One of them, 14:1, is a Lamb passage. The 144,000 with the Lamb on Mount Zion "had his [the Lamb's] name and his Father's name on their foreheads." Further references to the "subordination" of the Son in the Apocalypse are: 1:6 ("his God and Father"); 2:27; 3:5,21 ("my Father"); 3:2,12 (3) ("my God"). Commentators also call attention to the fact that the Revelation which Christ sends through St. John He receives from God (1:1); and He receives His power to rule from God (2:27). To this might be added that He ransomed men for God (5:9).

What is to be said of this obvious "subordination"? Many scholars discuss the matter, taking note of the passages which distinctly place the Son on the side of the Divine, and placing the "subordination" references over against the divinity references, let the matter go at that. Some, Wernle for one, go to the extreme of seeing an adoptionist Christology

²⁵Beckwith, op. cit., p. 313.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 313-14.

in 2:27.²⁷ At the conservative pole Feine holds (and we believe rightly so) that:

fuer den Verfasser der Apokalypse keine Schwierigkeit darbietet, die Menschheit und die goettliche Art sowie die himmlische Herrscherstellung Christi als Einheit zu schauen.²⁸

The present writer believes that the best explanations of the "coordination" of God and Christ, on the one hand, and the "subordination" of the Son to the Father, on the other, are presented by Charles, Swete, and Beckwith. The context in which we shall presently quote these three scholars is the same as the context of these last pages of this chapter-- the discussion of the "coordination" and the "subordination" passages. Charles writes:

Our author thus appears to co-ordinate God and Christ. Yet the relation is one rather of subordination than of equality. He never goes so far as the author of the Fourth Gospel. He does not state that God and Christ are one, nor does he ever call Him God. And yet He is to all intents and purposes God--the eternal Son of God, and the impression conveyed is that in all that He is, and in all that He does, He is one with the Father, and is a true revelation of God in the sphere of human activity.²⁹

Swete handles the matter thus:

Thus the writer seems either to coordinate or to identify Christ with God. Yet he is certainly not conscious of any tendency to ditheism, for his book, as has been said,

²⁷Paul Wernle, The Beginnings of Christianity, Vol. XV in Theological Translation Library, translated by G. A. Bienemann and edited by W. D. Morrison (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1903), I, 383.

²⁸Paul Feine, Die Religion des Neuen Testaments (Leipzig: Quelle & Meyer, 1921), pp. 130-31.

²⁹Charles, op. cit., I, cxii.

is rigidly monotheistic; nor, on the other hand, is he guilty of confusing the two Persons. The name of God is nowhere given to Christ in the Apocalypse; He is careful to identify the ascended Christ with the Christ of the humiliation; he is the firstborn of the dead [1:5, 18], the root and offspring of David [5:5; 22:16], the Lion of the tribe of Judah [5:5]; He can call God His God [3:8]. The enigma meets us every where in the New Testament, but in no book is it so perplexing to those who reject the Catholic doctrine of our Lord's Person as in the Apocalypse of John. . . . from the first his Christ is a complex conception in which human and Divine characteristics coexist. On the other hand we should doubtless err if we read into the Seer's visions the precision of the Nicene or the Chalcedonian Christology. An intuitive faith carries him beyond the point reached by the understanding; he knows that the identification of the ascended Christ with the Almighty Father is not inconsistent with strict monotheism, but he does not stop to ask himself how this can be. Some of his words point to the preexistence of the Son, others represent His exalted condition as the reward of victory. The reconciliation of these points of view is not necessary to the purpose of the book; it is enough that the Head of the Church is master of the situation which had arisen in Asia and of every similar situation that can arise to the world's end.³⁰

And lastly, and perhaps most Scriptural and satisfying, the words of Beckwith:

The problem presented by these two conceptions of Christ, apparently irreconcilable, is that which appears in the New Testament generally. In the Fourth Gospel two distinct lines of thought are dominant: "The Word was God," 1:1, and "The Father is greater than I," 14:28. So with St. Paul; compare the declaration, "being on an equality with God," Phil. 2:6, with that of 1 Cor. 11:3, "The head of Christ is God." The two conceptions of the person of Christ had come to be held singly yet clearly, but there appears as yet no attempt to reconcile them. The idea of "subordination" was inseparable from the Lord's incarnate life and mediatorial work; the fact of his divine exaltation came to be apprehended in that process through which the Spirit guides the Church into truth. The writers of the New Testament are prophets of a spiritual revelation, not philosophic theologians,

³⁰Swete, op. cit., clxii.

and they do not betray difficulty in holding the two views of the person of Christ in conjunction, without a clearly defined doctrine of unity. But they furnish the foundation truths upon which the Church at a later date based its precise definition of the two natures in one person.³¹

Thus to see Christ, to see the Lamb, as the GodMan, is to see Him as the Apocalypse presents Him, to see Him as He is. The Apocalypse witnesses to the doctrines of the two natures, the unity of the Person, and the equality of Christ, the Lamb, with God and the Spirit.

³¹Beckwith, op. cit., p. 314.

CHAPTER V

THE LAMB AND HIS SAINTS

"John never sees Jesus Christ alone, nor the Church alone."¹ Although this statement may somewhat overstate the case, by and large it is true. Whether saints are pictured on earth, in heaven awaiting the consummation, or in the Heavenly City, Christ, and frequently as the Lamb, is with them. In comparison with the last section of the previous chapter, Christ is presented in His relation to the saints to a greater extent than in His relation to God;² and, in contrast to His relation to His enemies, the relation of the Lamb to His saints occupies a considerably larger space in the Apocalypse.³

This chapter will concern itself with the consideration of this relation between Christ and the saints (a favorite designation for Christians in the Apocalypse; cf., 8:3-4; 11:18; 13:7,10; 14:12; 16:6; 18:20; 20:9). The Lamb passages will again give us only a partial picture of this relation, but we believe a significant picture. The nature of the relation

¹Martin Kiddle and M. K. Ross, The Revelation of St. John (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, [1940]), xlvii.

²J. J. Van Oosterzee, The Theology of the New Testament, translated from the Dutch by Maurice J. Evans (Second edition; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1871), p. 409.

³Dwight Marion Beck, "The Christology of the Apocalypse of John," in New Testament Studies, edited by Edwin P. Booth (New York: Abingdon--Cokesbury Press, c.1942), pp. 261-62.

between the Lamb and those for whom He was effectively slain (the saints) will demand that less attention be paid to the Lamb in this chapter as compared to the foregoing, since we will here spend considerable thought on the saint-side of the relationship, always, however, striving to maintain the Lamb-centered focus.

Somewhat of a difficulty presents itself in the fact that the Church is not always pictured on the same "level" in the Apocalypse. Weidner correctly observes that we see the Church on earth, in the heavenly state before the resurrection, and in the New Jerusalem.⁴ In other words, the Church militant, the Church triumphant, and the Church in final glory. The seven churches of chapters two and three are most certainly the Church militant. But in the succeeding chapters of the Apocalypse we have references to the Church on all three "levels." In the following presentation of the Lamb passages which deal with the relation between the Lamb and His Church, His saints, we shall not always be at pains to ascertain which "level" of the Church is before us. It is the one Church, whether still struggling, through the door of death, or in final glory. As such a unity we shall often view it.

The Universal Church

The first point we note is the breadth of the Church.

⁴Revere Franklin Weidner, Biblical Theology of the New Testament (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1891), II, 328.

In 5:9 the living creatures and the elders sing in their new song to the Lamb: "'Worthy art thou to take the scroll and to open its seals, for thou wast slain and by thy blood didst ransom men for God from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. . . .'" This fourfold classification continually recurs in the Apocalypse (5:9; 7:9; 11:9; 13:7; 14:6; cf., 10:11; 17:15); "this favourite [sic.] formula found a daily illustration in the polyglott cosmopolitan crowd who jostled one another in the agora or on the quays of the Asian seaport towns."⁵ "It includes all the bases of classification of mankind, all the circumstances which separate men, the barriers which were overthrown by the redeeming work of Christ."⁶ Both Swete and Charles hold, however, that the "redemptive scope" of this passage is "less wide" than, for example, 1 Jn. 2:2 ("the expiation . . . for the sins of the whole world."). Swete writes:

The scope which it assigns to the redemptive virtue of the Cross is less wide than that which is contemplated in 1 Tim. 2:3f.; 1 Jn. 2:2; but the "new song" refers only to those in whom Redemption has become effective by their incorporation in the Body of Christ. The oecumenical mission of the Church is, however, fully recognized; the Seer sees in it a worldwide Empire extending far beyond . . . the sway of the Caesars.⁷

⁵Henry Barclay Swete, The Apocalypse of St. John (Second edition; London: Macmillan and Co. Limited, 1907), p. 100.

⁶A. Plummer, T. Randell and A. T. Bett, Revelation, in The Pulpit Commentary, edited by H. D. M. Spence and Joseph S. Excell (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Co., n.d.), LI, 166.

⁷Swete, op. cit., p. 81; R. H. Charles, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1920), I, 147.

Thus the reference in 5:9 is to those who actually appropriate the redemption of the Lamb, "the saints" of verse 8; those who exclude themselves by their own rejection are not thought of. The potential of the redemption is unlimited; yet men may limit it by their own act. This universal potential is further exhibited in the "mankind" of 14:4. Speaking of the 144,000 with the Lamb on Mount Zion, St. John writes: "these have been redeemed from mankind. . . ." "This phrase summarizes the full enumeration given in 5:9."⁸

That the number of those in whom the redemption of the Lamb has proved effective is a large number is the explicit testimony of the Apocalypse. In the seventh chapter, after St. John has heard the number of the sealed--144,000--, he beholds "a great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, . . ." (7:9). And in 19:6 John hears "what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude," Swete holds that both "great multitudes" (7:9; 19:6) are the "Universal Church."⁹ What about the 144,000 to which we have repeatedly referred (14:1,3; cf., 7:1-8)? "The number denotes a large and perfect number; a multitude of which the total is complete."¹⁰ With this many scholars will agree, and many of them also will go along with Behm in defining the

⁸Charles, op. cit., II, 10.

⁹Swete, op. cit., p. 245.

¹⁰Plummer, op. cit., p. 347.

number thus: "Die symbolische Zahl [144,000] zeigt an, . . . die ganze Gottesgemeinde, ganz 'Israel.'"¹¹ Differences among scholars appear when we ask whether the "great multitudes" of 7:9; 19:6 are to be equated with the 144,000 of 7:4-8; 14:1,3. Swete differentiates between the innumerable multitude of 7:9 and the 144,000, taking the former as the Church in her final completed glory, the latter as the faithful Church on earth at any given time.¹² Reisner equates the 144,000 of 14:1,3 with the "great multitude" of 7:9-17, but distinguishes from these the 144,000 of 7:4-8.¹³ We prefer the view of Behm,¹⁴ Charles¹⁵ and Lenski,¹⁶ who identify the "great multitudes" (7:9; 19:6) with the 144,000 (7:4-8; 14:1,3); and we accept as explanation of St. John's use of a number in the one instance and his omission of it in the other the comment of Preston and Hanson:

In verse 9 [of chapter 7] the great multitude that no man could number is not to be distinguished from the 144,000 . . . as we have seen, the 144,000 is not meant to be taken literally, but indicates completeness. Here [7:9] the size of the Church is emphasized [sic.] rather than

¹¹Johannes Behm, Die Offenbarung des Johannes, in Das Neue Testament Deutsch, herausgegeben von Paul Althaus (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1953), XI, 44.

¹²Swete, op. cit., p. 177.

¹³Erwin Reisner, Das Buch mit den Sieben Siegeln (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1949), p. 72.

¹⁴Behm, op. cit., passim.

¹⁵Charles, op. cit., I & II, passim.

¹⁶R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. John's Revelation (Columbus: The Wartburg Press, c.1943), passim.

its completeness.¹⁷

Thus the Lamb died for all, yet not all appropriate the benefits of His death by faith; but those who do are, by God's grace, many in number.

The Righteousness of the Saints

The redemption effected by the death of the Lamb we have adequately treated in chapter III under the section which deals with the Lamb as Redeemer.¹⁸

Of interest to us here is the manifestation of personal redemption and righteousness under the symbol of "white robes" (7:9,14; 6:11; 3:5 "white garments"; cf., 19:8; 22:14). The fullest "white robe" passage is 7:14, in which the elder answers his own question as to who make up the "great multitude" with the words: "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed [ἐπλυναν] their robes and made them white [ἐλεύκαναν] in the blood of the Lamb." This "strongly paradoxical expression,"¹⁹ this "figurative incongruity"²⁰--red blood making robes white--"is in accord with the manner of this book, where violent contrasts abound."²¹

¹⁷Ronald H. Preston and Anthony T. Hanson, The Revelation of Saint John the Divine (London: SCM Press, 1949), p. 84.

¹⁸Supra, pp. 38-43.

¹⁹Charles, op. cit., I, 214.

²⁰Kiddle and Ross, op. cit., p. 140.

²¹Swete, op. cit., p. 103.

But there is another paradox here, lying in the active voice of ἔπλυναν and ἐλεύκαναν, which appears to contradict the redemption effected by the Lamb. By way of explanation Charles refers to Phil. 2:12-13, where the two ideas of God's grace and man's work are combined in Paul's words: "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for God is at work in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure."²²

Certainly no reference to earning one's own salvation dare be injected into 7:14. For "in the blood of the Lamb" plainly points to the "forgiveness of sins through faith in the sacrifice of Christ."²³ That Christ is their Redeemer, that their salvation is by God's grace, is the testimony of the saints themselves in 7:10: "Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb." Weiss remarks:

If humanity is delivered from the guilt of sin and the power of Satan by the voluntary death of Christ and His exaltation by God, then those who stand as conquerors before the throne of God must confess that they are indebted for the Messianic salvation (σωτηρία) to God, who has shown Himself gracious to them as their God (7:10, 12; 4:11; 19:6; cf., 21:3,7), and to the Lamb (7:10; cf., v.14), so that their salvation is a work of God (12:10; 19:1).²⁴

Another passage which speaks of the "clothing" of the saints is 19:8, where it is said concerning the Bride, the

²²Charles, op. cit., I, 214.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Bernhard Weiss, Biblical Theology of the New Testament, translated from the third revised edition of the German by David Eaton and James E. Duguid (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, n.d.), II, 280-81.

wife of the Lamb: "it was granted her [ἐδόθη αὐτῇ] to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure"--for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints." The phrase ἐδόθη αὐτῇ (αὐτῇ, αὐτοῖς) is one of the keynotes of the Apocalypse, and occurs some twenty times in chapters 6-20.²⁵ In the case of such passives in Scripture it is usually safe to supply God as the Agent. Such is the case here. So Plummer takes it, explaining 19:8 in the following words:

"It was given her," the power comes from God . . . and yet "she arrays herself;" the action is still voluntary . . . the righteous acts of the saints. That is, their former righteousness, exhibited in fidelity to God and hostility to the world, obtained and retained by the grace of God, now [in heaven] forms their chief glory. So "their works do follow them" (14:13).²⁶

The saints receive righteousness and they acquire righteousness, both by the grace and power of God. The one is the garment with which Christ clothes them; the other, the garment of their own works of righteousness. When they are given the one, they are given the other; by having the second it is made evident that they have the first. In fact, their "righteous deeds" are the evidence of their righteousness both in this life and at the final judgment (cf., Mt. 25:34ff.). To be sure, the good works of the saints in this life are imperfect by reason of the sin clinging to them, but such imperfections are removed by the perfect righteousness of Christ.²⁷ In the final

²⁵Swete, op. cit., p. 247.

²⁶Plummer, op. cit., p. 448.

²⁷Lenski, op. cit., p. 543.

analysis, therefore, the salvation of the saints is wholly the work of God and the Lamb (cf., 7:10); of themselves they can do nothing.

The Sanctified Lives of the Saints

That the life of the saints is one of prayer and praise is the evident implication of 5:8 (cf., 6:10; 8:3-4):

And when he [the Lamb] had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and with golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers [προσευχῆ] of the saints.²⁸

Beckwith offers a rather uncharitable comment on the phrase "which are the prayers of the saints." He writes:

The introduction of the prayers of the saints here is strange. This part of the scene is heavenly and includes nothing earthly; the latter is introduced first in v.13, in distinction from this part; and the theme of all the utterances in the scene is praise, not prayer (προσευχῆ is not praise, but supplication), and the utterances of the saints are included among those mentioned in v.13. These words "which is [sic.] the prayers of the saints" are very probably a gloss brought in from 8:3. If genuine, they probably refer to supplications of the saints for the speedy accomplishment of God's will concerning the kingdom as in 8:3; 6:10--an idea, however, not in keeping with anything else in the scene.²⁹

According to Trench, προσευχή is wide enough to mean praise.³⁰

²⁸On incense as a symbol of prayer see Ps. 140:2.

²⁹Isborn T. Beckwith, The Apocalypse of John (New York: The Macmillan Company, c.1919), p. 512.

³⁰Richard Chenevix Trench, Synonyms of the New Testament (Ninth edition; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1880), pp. 188-89. Cf., Joseph Henry Thayer, A Greek--English Lexicon of the New Testament (Corrected edition; New York: American Book Company, c.1889), p. 126, sub δέησις.

Thus Lenski takes it, speaking of *προευχαι* as "prayers in the widest sense, even in the broad sense of worship; so we do not restrict the term to petitions although these are not excluded."³¹ Weidner goes so far as to equate prayer with praise in the Apocalypse. He writes:

Frequent reference is also made to "the prayers of the saints" (5:8; 8:3,4). We learn the contents of Christian thanksgiving and prayer, not merely from the few words of 22:17,20, but also from the petitions to which expression is given in heaven. We need only compare the adorations of the four living creatures (4:8,9), of the twenty-four elders (4:10,11; 5:9,10; 11:16,17), of the angels (5:12), of the victors (7:10; 15:3,4), and of the heavenly inhabitants (12:10,11; 19:1-7). The prayers, as the passages quoted show, are sometimes addressed to God, sometimes to the Lamb, and sometimes to God and the Lamb at the same time.³²

Most probably the Church on earth is praying in 5:8. "*Προευχαι* are nowhere in Scripture attributed to the saints in heaven. . . ."³³ Preston and Hanson see here "John's first hint of the participation of the worship of the church on earth in that of the church in heaven, of which more is said in 8:3ff."³⁴ This "participation" idea appears to be an acceptable view, with significant overtones for the doctrine of the Church. Be that as it may, the fact remains that in 5:8 we catch a glimpse of the prayer--praise life of the saints.

³¹Lenski, *op. cit.*, p. 205.

³²Weidner, *op. cit.*, II, 275-76.

³³Lenski, *op. cit.*, p. 205.

³⁴Preston and Hanson, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

A passage which affords a fuller glimpse at the sanctification which characterizes the earthly life of the saint is 14:4-5:

It is these [the 144,000 on Mount Zion with the Lamb] who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are chaste ["virgins," *παρθένοι*]; it is these who follow the Lamb wherever he goes; these have been redeemed from mankind as first fruits for God and the Lamb, and in their mouth no lie was found, for they are spotless.

Concerning 14:1-5 Charles rightly states: "This section has been an occasion of great difficulty to scholars."³⁵ This observation is especially pertinent to the words in v.4: "who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are chaste ["virgins," *παρθένοι*]," Charles himself believes that these words are the work of a "monkish interpolator."³⁶ He is followed in this view by others, notably Preston and Hanson, who state with reference to 14:4:

It seems likely that some ascetically minded scribe took the opportunity of inserting his propaganda into Revelation before the text had become standardized. But there is no manuscript evidence for this [!].³⁷

Among scholars who accept the text as original there are those who contend for a literal interpretation of the words. So Behm, Kiddle, and Beckwith.³⁸ Behm holds that an actual renunciation of marriage in view of the nearness of the Parousia is here meant, and refers to Mk. 12:25; Mt. 19:12; 1 Cor. 7:1,8,26ff.

³⁵Charles, *op. cit.*, II, 11.

³⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 8-11.

³⁷Preston and Hanson, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

³⁸Beckwith, *op. cit.*, p. 652.

for confirmation of his view.³⁹ Kiddle goes much farther when he states:

There are degrees of blessedness, and in John's opinion the married Christian is further from the godly ideal than the unmarried; the celibate alone is fit to be the unblemished lamb of sacrifice.⁴⁰

Lenski contends vehemently against any such "supersaint" idea in this virgin reference⁴¹, as does Beck when he comments:

Clearly the emphasis falls on the condition of the redeemed as undefiled rather than on celibacy, especially in view of many condemnations of fornication and the exaltation of marriage elsewhere in the book.⁴²

With this Swete is in substantial agreement, holding that the words must be taken metaphorically and that the emphasis lies on chastity, when he states in explanation of this description of the saints in 14:4:

That chastity should be chosen as the first distinctive virtue of the Christian brotherhood will not seem strange to those who reflect that pagan life was honey-combed with immorality of the grossest kind.⁴³

Lastly, there are those who give these enigmatic words of 14:4 a spiritual interpretation. This position is well stated by Plummer, who comments:

There is little doubt that these words are intended in a spiritual sense. In the Old Testament the employment of the figure of adultery and fornication to denote spirit-

³⁹Behm, op. cit., pp. 81-2.

⁴⁰Kiddle and Ross, op. cit., p. 268.

⁴¹Lenski, op. cit., pp. 423-24.

⁴²Beck, op. cit., p. 264.

⁴³Swete, op. cit., p. 179.

ual unfaithfulness is common (cf. 2 Chron. 21:11; Jer. 3:9, etc.). St. John elsewhere in the Apocalypse makes use of the same symbolism [cf., 2:20; 17:5-6]. Similarly, also, St. John pictures the faithful Church as the bride adorned for her Husband the Lamb (19:7-8). So also St. Paul (2 Cor. 11:2), "I espoused you as a chaste virgin to one Husband, Christ." Παρθένοι, "virgins", is a word equally applicable to men or women. This verse, therefore, seems to describe those who are free from spiritual impurity and unfaithfulness; those who have not worshipped the beast and his image.⁴⁴

We believe this to be a most Scriptural and satisfying interpretation. A significant "theocentric" observation, which alludes to the sexual abstinence enjoined upon occasion in the Old Testament (cf., Ex. 19:15; 1 Sam. 21:5), and makes 14:4 the New Testament counterpart of this, is offered by Reisner, who summarizes his discussion on the verse thus:

Die Jungfraulichkeit ist nicht Bedingung, sondern Zeichen fuer die Reinheit derer, die in die Schar der Seligen aufgenommen werden. Im Alten Bund, der ja ein Bund der Zeichen und der Gleichnisse war, haelt sich der Mensch, in dem er das Gesetz befolgt, selbst rein. Im Neuen Bund aber wird er von Gott gereinigt, erhaelt er sozusagen die Jungfraulichkeit, die er sonst bei aller aeusseren Askese doch niemals erreichen koennte, zum Geschenk, und als so Beschenker wird er als reines Opfer angenommen.⁴⁵

The remaining indications of the sanctified lives of the saints in 14:4-5 offer less difficulty. The reference to following "the Lamb wherever he goes" (οὗτοι οἱ ἀκολουθοῦντες τῷ ἀρνίῳ ὅπου ἂν ὑπάγῃ) might seem to indicate that the saints follow the lamb about in heaven. But that the reference is

⁴⁴Plummer, op. cit., p. 347. See Lenski, op. cit., pp. 423-24.

⁴⁵Reisner, op. cit., p. 137.

plainly to their earthly lives is seen when we recall that the time of a substantivized participle is determined by the context. Since the other two οὗτοι clauses in 14:4, with which the οὗτοι clause under consideration is parallel, have their principle verbs in the past tense (ἐμολύνθησαν and ἠγοράσθησαν), it is most probable that ἦσαν, rather than εἶναι, is to be supplied as the linking verb between οὗτοι and οἱ ἀκολουθοῦντες. In the dependent clause (ὅπου ἂν ὑπάγῃ) the verb changes to the present tense "because the paths of Christ's leading are thought of as absolute, without reference to time."⁴⁶ The saints are those who obeyed the Lord's call, "Follow me" (cf., Mk. 2:14; 10:21; Lk. 9:59; Jn. 1:43; 21:19; cf., 1 Pet. 2:21). As Swete tersely puts it: "the Christian life is from first to last an imitatio Agni."⁴⁷

With regard to the description of the saints as those "in whose mouth no lie was found," the positions of Swete and Lenski, though differing in some respects, are equally satisfying. Swete refers to the actual truthfulness of Christians in contrast to the prevalent lack of it among their heathen neighbors.⁴⁸ Lenski takes "lie" in the sense of 1 Jn. 1:6-10; 2:22; 4:20, in the sense of the beast's deceit (13:14), "lie" that denies the Lamb.⁴⁹

⁴⁶Beckwith, op. cit., p. 652.

⁴⁷Swete, op. cit., p. 179.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 180.

⁴⁹Lenski, op. cit., p. 426.

The last sanctification reference in 14:4-5: "for they are spotless" ($\acute{\alpha}\mu\omega\mu\omicron\iota$), "sums up in one word the description of the perfect character of those who are seen with the Lamb on Mount Zion; cf., Eph. 1:4; Col. 1:22."⁵⁰ Swete contends, on the basis of the usage of $\acute{\alpha}\mu\omega\mu\omicron\varsigma$ in Biblical Greek, that its meaning is "unblemished" in the sacrificial sense rather than "blameless," and states concerning these 144,000 saints: "Their self-consecration was free from the insincerity which would have rendered it unacceptable in the sight of God."⁵¹

A glimpse into the "faithfulness" of the saints, which may be considered in the category of sanctification, is given in 12:11 and 17:14.

And they [the saints] have conquered him [the dragon] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death (12:11).

There is here a clear reference to the Master's teaching (cf., Jn. 12:25; Mt. 10:39; 16:25; Mk. 8:35f.; Lk. 9:24; 17:33).

They were so unattached to their earthly existence that they were ready to die, if need be, rather than to deny the blood and the Word and their testimony.⁵² In 17:14 the saints are explicitly called "faithful": "and those with him [the conquering Lord of lords and King of kings] are called and chosen and faithful" ($\pi\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\iota$). No doubt the word "faithful" here

⁵⁰Beckwith, op. cit., p. 653.

⁵¹Swete, op. cit., p. 181.

⁵²Lenski, op. cit., p. 380.

has the connotation of patient endurance, fidelity, which some scholars claim is the meaning of all the $\pi\acute{\iota}\epsilon\tau\iota\varsigma$ words in the Apocalypse (2:13,19; 13:10; 14:12; 17:14).⁵³ The characterization of the saints as "called and chosen" we are about to consider in the following section of this chapter. Swete, combining all three characterizations of the saints in 17:14 ("called and chosen and faithful"), offers a splendid comment in the words:

though on God's side no failure is to be feared (Ro. 8: 29f. . . .), on man's part there is no such security (2 Pet. 1:10); the climax [victory] is only reached when the "called and chosen" are found "faithful."⁵⁴

The Saints are Called, Elected and Sealed

The Lamb passage with which we have dealt (17:14) with regard to the faithfulness of the saints also ascribes to them the characteristics of "called and chosen." The pertinent section of the verse reads: "and those with him [the conquering Lord of lords and King of kings] are called [$\kappa\lambda\eta\tau\acute{o}\upsilon$] and chosen [$\acute{\epsilon}\kappa\lambda\epsilon\kappa\tau\acute{o}\upsilon$] and faithful." The obvious reference in $\kappa\lambda\eta\tau\acute{o}\upsilon$ is the gracious Gospel invitation summoning a man to partake of the Messianic salvation, to become a saint.⁵⁵ In the case of those with the Lamb in 17:14 this Gospel call was effective (cf., Mt. 22:14), for preceding their effective calling

⁵³Charles, op. cit., I, cxv-cxvi.

⁵⁴Swete, op. cit., p. 224.

⁵⁵Weidner, op. cit., II, 272.

in point of time (if one may speak of "time" here) and succeeding their call from their personal religious viewpoint and in John's word order in 17:14 is their eternal election (ἐκλεκτοί). Whom God chose He called (Ro. 8:29-30), and whom He called He chose (17:14). We fail to see the justification of separating calling and election, as Swete would have it, when he says: "to have been chosen by God is more than to have been called by Him."⁵⁶ Nor are we satisfied with Plummer's explanation of this election, which holds that those who hear the call dedicate their lives to God's service and thus become His chosen servants.⁵⁷ We believe that the term ἐκλεκτοί refers to an eternal election, and the passage to which we now turn for further material on the election of the saints makes this doctrine an incontrovertible one in the teaching of the Apocalypse.

A concept which we have already treated in connection with the Lamb as Dispenser of Life,⁵⁸ namely, "the book of life," is this proof par excellence for eternal election in the Apocalypse. The pertinent Lamb passage is 13:8:

and all who dwell on earth will worship it [the beast from the earth], every one whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that was slain [οὐ οὐ γέγραπται τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ βιβλίῳ τῆς ζωῆς τοῦ ἀρνίου τοῦ ἐσφαγμένου ἀπὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου].

⁵⁶Swete, op. cit., p. 224.

⁵⁷Plummer, op. cit., p. 418.

⁵⁸Supra, pp. 44-5.

The unsettled question as to whether ἀπό καταβολῆς κόσμου is to be taken with γέγραπται or with ἔσφαγμένον need not detain us here. Suffice it to say, that grammar and the analogia fidei permit both possibilities, and that scholarship is quite evenly divided on the question. Those who claim that the ἀπό phrase is to be taken with ἔσφαγμένον have 1 Pet. 1: 19-20 in their favor, and those who contend that the ἀπό phrase goes with γέγραπται have 17:8 (θαυμασθήσονται οἱ κατοικοῦντες ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, ἧν οὐ γέγραπται τὸ ὄνομα ἐπὶ τὸ βιβλίον τῆς ζωῆς ἀπὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου), a precise parallel, in their favor. We believe this latter view to be preferable. But, as Osborn correctly observes, the result is the same in either case.⁵⁹ In fact, both the Calvary Event and the enrollment of the saints in the book of life have been foreordained in the timeless counsels of God. Had the eternal love of God not planned that the Lamb should be slain, a book of life would have been a farce; and had God not inscribed the names of His saints-to-be in a book of life, the slaying of the Lamb would have been pointless. Although it is our opinion that the ἀπό καταβολῆς κόσμου is to be taken with γέγραπται in 13:8, let us not lose sight of the fact that the book of life in which the names of the saints were inscribed is "the book of life of the Lamb that was slain." The points of contact between Christ the Lamb and the saints in all areas of theology are legion, and the

⁵⁹Thomas Osborn, The Lion and the Lamb (New York: The Abingdon Press, c.1922), p. 175.

two remain inseparable.

Weiss nicely states the import of eternal inscription in the book of life when he writes:

Nay, it seems as though this gift [eternal life] were given by an eternal divine predestination, since the recording in the book of life (21:27) is the result even before the foundation of the world (13:8; 17:8). But as the name of any one may again be blotted out of the book of life (3:5), and at the judgment examination is made only what names remain there (20:12,15), that destination implies no irrevocable divine purpose ruling the individual, but only traces the election of Christians back to the eternal purpose of salvation.⁶⁰

Akin to the doctrine of election is the concept of "sealing" in the Apocalypse. The saints who are "called and chosen" (17:14) are called upon "to confirm their calling and election" (2 Pet. 1:10). They do this by remaining "faithful" (17:14), and God aids them in their faithfulness by "sealing" them. The main reference to this sealing in the Apocalypse is 7:3-8, where the 144,000 are sealed upon their foreheads. An indication of the nature of this seal received by the saints is given us in a Lamb passage which the majority of scholars hold is not to be distinguished from the sealing concept. The passage is 14:1: "Then I [John] looked, and lo, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with him a hundred and forty-four thousand who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads." Thus the seal referred to in 7:3-8 is thought of as consisting of a name, rather of two names (cf., Jn. 14:6), just as

⁶⁰Weiss, op. cit., II, 281.

the pernicious counterpart of the Divine sealing is the mark of the beast borne by his adherents and consists of his name or the number of his name (13:16-18). Behm appears to present one of the finest treatments of the significance of the saints bearing the name of the Father and the Son on their foreheads.

He writes:

sie [the 144,000] stehen unter allmaechtigem Schutz. Die Namen Christi und seines Vaters, die sie als Merkmal ihrer Zugehoerigkeit auf der Stirn tragen (s. 3,12; 22, 4), buergen dafuer, dass sie in sicherer Hut sind, allem Zwang und niedrigem Wetteifer zum Trotz, mit dem das Malzeichen des Antichrists der Menschheit aufgedrungen wird (s. 13:16ff.). "Wenn Christus seine Kirche schuetzt, so mag die Hoelle toben." Mitten in der von widergoettlichen Maechten beherrschten Welt soll es einen Bezirk geben, in dem der Herr, der in den Tod ging fuer die Seinen, sie um sich sammelt und die Heilskraft seiner Gegenwart erfahren laesst (s. Mt. 28,20; Jn. 14,18ff.)⁶¹

In view of the fact that the saints in the Heavenly City are spoken of as still bearing the Divine name (22:4), Beckwith holds that "the bearing of the name is a token of victory, .

...⁶²

The Saints Have Conquered

A direct result of the faithfulness of the saints, which, in turn, is a result of their Divine calling, election, and sealing, is that they come off conquerors over all their enemies. "Conquer" (*vikaúw*) is a common word in the Apocalypse and occurs with reference to the saints in 2:7,11,17,26; 3:5,12,

⁶¹Behm, op. cit., p. 81.

⁶²Beckwith, op. cit., p. 651.

21; 12:11; 15:2; 21:7; cf., 7:14. The frequency with which the prospect of the ultimate victory of the saints is portrayed in the Apocalypse offsets the fears and misgivings which the repeated descriptions of the intense conflicts with their enemies might well cause to rise in their hearts. As certain as the Lamb is Conqueror,⁶³ so certain is it that the saints, in the Lamb, are conquerors. The triumph of the saints is, however, not so much an imitation of the Lamb's as its result, as we shall see.⁶⁴

The fact that the saints are conquerors (and we think of the saints as through the door of death in this section) is implicit in a Lamb passage to which we have referred often. The scene is that of the great multitude standing before the throne and before the Lamb, concerning which St. John is asked by an elder who made up this great multitude and whence they have come. The elder's own answer is: "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (7:14). Although commentators are not agreed on the nature of this "great tribulation," we prefer the position of Dean and offer his comment on the matter. Dean writes:

Every age has its conflict that can be pre-eminently the great tribulation; and from that conflict there are always those that come victorious and go to swell the great

⁶³Supra, pp. 29-33.

⁶⁴Ragnar Leivestad, Christ the Conqueror (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1954), p. 221.

multitude which no man can number.⁶⁵

And to equate this "great tribulation" with that enemy of the Christian which is commonly designated "the world" has some probability.⁶⁶

The close parallel between the two statements regarding the saints in 7:14 is noteworthy: they are those "who have come out of the great tribulation," and they are also those who "have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."⁶⁷ Another Lamb passage which speaks of the saints as conquerors, this time conquerors of the devil, and which makes the connection between their conquest and "the blood of the Lamb" even more direct is 12:11:

And they [our brethren of v.10] have conquered him [the devil, as described in v.9] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.

The victory of the saints is "derivative"; they conquer only "by the blood of the Lamb."⁶⁸ Stevens' comment on this point is enlightening. He says:

Although the saved have "overcome" [conquered], that is, achieved a moral victory by effort and struggle, yet this victory is not regarded as due to their own power or as

⁶⁵J. T. Dean, The Book of Revelation (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1915), p. 118. The positions of Lenski, op. cit., pp. 261-62; and of Beckwith, op. cit., p. 545, are comparable with that of Dean. On the other hand, Swete, op. cit., p. 102; Behm, op. cit., p. 46; and Charles, op. cit., I, 213, refer to a specific great trial accompanying the final judgment.

⁶⁶Such is the position of Plummer, op. cit., passim.

⁶⁷See supra, pp. 66-7, where this aspect of 7:14 is treated.

⁶⁸Leivestad, op. cit., p. 218.

founding a claim to heavenly blessedness; they have rather "overcome because of the blood of the Lamb" (12:11); they have "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (7:14); that is, their salvation is ascribed to the divine grace as revealed and applied through the redeeming work of Christ. Here, as elsewhere in the New Testament, the correlation between grace and faith--as opposed to debt and works--is preserved. Salvation is by faith because it is of grace.⁶⁹

Thus "the blood of the Lamb" is the primary cause of the victory of the saints. But the words "and by the word of their testimony" point to a secondary cause of their victory, namely, "their personal testimony to Jesus"⁷⁰ in life and word, "even unto death," if need be. "Thus the two sides of man's redemption are here brought forward together."⁷¹ Here again is the paradox between God at work in the saints (grace) and the saint working out his own salvation (faithfulness). With regard to the mooted question as to whether the reference to "death" in 12:11 necessarily implies martyrdom,⁷² we believe Lenski's position is the most tenable. He comments:

They [the saints of 12:11] would rather suffer martyrdom than to deny that blood and the Word and their testimony. We have an example in Paul, Acts 20:24. The extreme "up to death" is mentioned, but, as so often, only in order to include this and thus all lesser evidence of faithfulness for the Lord needs only a few in order to fill

⁶⁹George Barker Stevens, The Theology of the New Testament (Second edition; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1927), p. 547.

⁷⁰Charles, op. cit., I, 329.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Such is the opinion of Charles, op. cit., I & II, passim; Swete, op. cit., passim; and Behm, op. cit., passim. all of whom refer to martyrdom in 12:11 and in other passages which speak of the Saints as conquerors.

up the number of bloody martyrs, (6:11), for others it is enough to be faithful in affliction.⁷³

The saints have thus come victorious through the "great tribulation" of their earthly lives, they have conquered the devil in all his attempts to devour them, and, lastly, they have conquered the Antichristian powers of the Apocalypse, as we see from 15:2:

And I [John] saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name [the Antichristian powers], standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands.

It is not in accord with our present purposes to discuss the enigmatic character of the beasts, the image of the beast and the number of the beast in the Apocalypse. We believe that those who broadly define all of these evil symbolizations as "the Antichristian powers" are most probably correct.⁷⁴ The point we are making is that the saints have overcome and conquered all their enemies. They stand victorious in heaven with their victorious Lamb, who was slain to give them the victory over the world, the devil, and all Antichristian powers, and to whom they have remained faithful unto death.

The Saints are a Kingdom and Priests

The covenant of Sinai had promised Israel: "you shall be to me [Jahweh] a kingdom of priests . . . (Ex. 19:6). The ful-

⁷³Lenski, op. cit., p. 380.

⁷⁴Ibid., passim; Charles, op. cit., I & II, passim; Plummer, op. cit., passim.

fillment of this promise is expressly stated with regard to the saints in the Apocalypse. Already in the sixth verse of the Book, in John's first doxology to Christ, he writes of Him: "and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, . . ." (1:6). The first Lamb passage which expresses the kingdom-priests thought is the doxology of the living creatures and the elders to the Lamb in 5:10: "'and hast made them [the men ransomed for God] a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.'"

The evident meaning of both of the above passages (1:6; 5:10) is "that Christ has made us a kingdom each member of which is a priest unto God."⁷⁵ To be noted is the fact that in both passages kingship and priesthood are conjoined: in 1:6 they stand in apposition to one another, in 5:10 they are connected by *καί*, and in 1 Pet. 2:9 they are combined in one expression, *βασιλείον ἱεράτευμα*.⁷⁶ Swete observes: "Priesthood and royalty are the mutually complementary aspects of the service of God, . . ."⁷⁷ Although 1:6 and 5:10 speak of the kingdom and priests to God, 20:6 speaks of the saints as "priests of God and of Christ, . . ." And the saints serve both God and the Lamb (7:15; 22:3); they worship both God and the Lamb (14:3; 15:3-4; 19:6-8; 22:3). The Lamb has made the saints a kingdom and priests to God, and in so doing

⁷⁵Charles, *op. cit.*, I, 16.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, II, 186.

⁷⁷Swete, *op. cit.*, p. 264.

He has made them a kingdom and priests to Himself.

"The royal priesthood involves the exercise of it on earth."⁷⁸ This exercise involves the personal privileges of drawing near to God, through Jesus Christ, without any other mediator, of offering prayers and thanksgivings and devoting oneself in obedience and service to God.⁷⁹ As the priest in the Old Testament times had access to and communion with God, so every saint in the New Testament era has this precious privilege.⁸⁰ As the heavenly servants, the angels of God (19:10), gladly perform His will in heaven, so His saints on earth find servility to His will a privilege.

The phrase "they shall reign [*βασιλεύσουσιν*] on the earth" (5:10) is a bit puzzling. Some take it to mean that the saints rule over sin, flesh, and Satan.⁸¹ Others, stressing the future tense (*βασιλεύσουσιν*), refer the ruling to the Millennial Kingdom (cf., 20:6). But the future tense is contested by a variant in the present tense (*βασιλεύουσιν*), which we believe to be the correct reading.⁸² Thus the reign of the

⁷⁸Charles Augustus Briggs, The Messiah of the Apostles (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1895), p. 402.

⁷⁹Weidner, op. cit., II, 274. Cf., Ro. 12:1-2; 1 Pet. 2:5; Heb. 13:15.

⁸⁰Beckwith, op. cit., p. 430.

⁸¹Plummer, op. cit., p. 166.

⁸²Nestle prints the future tense. Lenski, op. cit., p. 208; Charles, op. cit., I, 148; and Swete, op. cit., p. 82, contend for the present tense because it is the more difficult reading.

saints is begun in this life (Mt. 5:3,5; 1 Cor. 4:8), to be completed in the life to come (22:5). The close connection, not to say equation, of the kingdom and priesthood ideas in the passages we have been considering seems to allow that we define this reign in much the same manner as we described the priesthood of the saint. The saints reign as priests, they serve as kings. On this kingdom-priest aspect of the saints' earthly lives Behm comments:

Ihrem koeniglichen Herrn (vgl. v.5) verdanken die Christen die stolze Wuerde, nicht bloss seine Untertanen, vielmehr selbst Traeger der Koenigsherrschaft, Throngenossen Christi, zu sein. Wozu das alttestamentliche Israel von seinem Gott bestimmt war (vgl. 2. Mose 19,6), was Daniel dem Volke der "Heiligen des Hoechsten" fuer die Endzeit verhies (vgl. Dan. 7,18), was Jesus den "Armen im Geiste" zusagte (s. Mt. 5,3), das sieht der Seher an jedem Gliede der Christengemeinde erfuehlt: geistliches Weltherrscher-tum. . . . Aber das Herrscherrecht der Throngenossen Christi ist verbunden . . . mit der Dienstpflicht von Priestern Gottes: Christus gleich haben sie freien Zugang zu Gott, ihm anbetend zu dienen und fuer andere vor ihm einzutreten. Die Christen sind Priester von Gottes Gnaden, Gottes maechtig durchs Gebet und zum Dienste Gottes da, den anderen auch ein Christus zu werden, wie Christus ihnen geworden ist (Luther).⁸³

The completion and perfection of the kingdom-priests character of the saints will transpire in the Heavenly City of the world to come. There "his servants shall worship [λατρεῦσθε] him; . . . and they shall reign [βασιλεύσθε] for ever and ever" (22:3,5).⁸⁴ Here again the close relation between serving and ruling is evident, as Reisner points out, when he says:

⁸³Behm, op. cit., p. 9.

⁸⁴The reference in "him" is treated supra, pp. 54-5.

Die Erloestest herrschen als Koenige (Vers 5) und dienen als Knechte (Vers 3). Beides ist dasselbe [!]. Zwischen Herrschen und Dienen besteht in der Vollendung kein Unterschied. . . . Die Herrschaft des Menschen ist Gottesdienst und umgekehrt; denn beide sind Eines in der Liebe.⁸⁵

We add to this the interesting observation of Swete:

Perfect service will be accompanied by perfect sovereignty--will be perfect sovereignty. The beauty of the sequence λατρεύουσιν . . . βασιλεύουσιν has been finely caught by the Gregorian phrase "cui servire regnare est."⁸⁶

The Eternal Blessedness of the Saints

The final section of this chapter brings us to the place and point where the eternal purposes of God and the ardent hopes of Christians are fully realized--the Heavenly City of eternity. Stevens correctly observes that the description of this City (in 21:1-22:5) "is probably the most magnificent passage in all apocalyptic literature."⁸⁷ The frequent mention of the Lamb is noticeable in this description of the New Jerusalem; in fact, this is the Lamb's City (cf., 21:9, 22, 23, 27; 22:1, 3).⁸⁸ It is not in accord with our purposes to present a full description of the Heavenly City. As usual, we shall notice what the Lamb passages have to say, and as we consider them it will, perhaps, be most reverent often to let St. John's words stand unincumbered by extensive comment on

⁸⁵Reisner, op. cit., p. 197.

⁸⁶Swete, op. cit., p. 301.

⁸⁷Stevens, op. cit., p. 562.

⁸⁸Beckwith, op. cit., pp. 757, 759.

matters which far transcend our present experience and our fondest hopes and dreams.

Prior to the description of the Heavenly City in 21:1-22:5 glimpses of the blessed condition of the saints in glory are afforded in the Apocalypse. One of these glimpses appears in 7:9-17, a section to which we have referred often, which presents the great multitude of the redeemed before the throne and before the Lamb. From this section we note particularly here a portion of v.17: "For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their [the saints'] Shepherd, . . ." When we call to mind the Oriental shepherd-sheep relationship, we realize how complete and satisfying the care of the saints is. When we notice that the Lamb is their Shepherd, we meet with another of the Apocalypse's paradoxes. A paradox made possible by the fact that the Lamb has taken the nature of the sheep, and as one of the flock was slain for the flock; "the ποιμήν ὁ καλός is Himself of the fold (τὸ ἀρνίον) . . ." ⁸⁹ This Divine shepherding belongs, of course, also to the present life of the saint, but only in the future life does it meet with a full response (cf., Jn. 10:4; Rev. 14:4). ⁹⁰ Another glimpse of the saints with the Lamb appears in 14:1, where they stand on Mount Zion with the Lamb; but no particular insight into their blessed state is afforded here, except for the fact that they are with the Lamb (cf., 7:9; 17:14), which

⁸⁹Swete, op. cit., p. 105.

⁹⁰Ibid.

in itself comprehends all blessedness.

We are prepared for the view of the Heavenly City itself by the announcement concerning "the Bride, the wife of the Lamb." That this announcement and the subsequent description of the City of God is the climax of the Apocalypse hardly requires proof. The great multitude of chapter 19 sings in its doxology to God:

Let us rejoice and exult and give him [God] the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure--for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints (19:7-8).⁹¹

To which an angel, addressing John, adds: "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb" (19:9). Regarding the two figures here presented--the Bride in v.7 and the marriage supper in v.9--Plummer offers an acceptable explanation in the words:

The figure of the "marriage supper" is rather a new symbol of the bride; though very probably suggested by it. For those who partake of the "marriage supper" are those who constitute the bride, viz. the faithful Church of God.⁹²

The conception of a "Divine Marriage" is deeply rooted in both Testaments (cf., Ps. 44; Is. 54:1-8; Ezek. 16:1ff.; Hos. 2:19; Mt. 22:2ff.; Mk. 2:19; Jn. 3:29; 2Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:25ff.).⁹³ Plummer quotes Alford to the effect that this figure of a mar-

⁹¹"The righteous deeds of the saints" is discussed supra, pp. 67-9.

⁹²Plummer, op. cit., p. 443.

⁹³Swete, op. cit., p. 246.

riage between the Lord and His people, between the Lamb and His saints, "is too frequent and familiar to need explanation"94 The fact that the saints are with the Lamb, to which we referred above, finds its perfection in this marital union.

That the Bride, the Church in glory, and the Heavenly City are synonomous figures is the manifest declaration of the angel to John in 21:9: "'Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.'" Verse 10 then states: "and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God." The following verses of chapter 21 and the first five verses of chapter 22 then describe the Heavenly City. We shall pause to notice only a few details wherein the description specifically concerns the Lamb.

The first of these details is one which, unfortunately, disrupts the unity and progression of this section; but it is a Lamb passage, and must be treated here if anywhere. We have reference to the description of the Heavenly City in 21:14: "And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb." Perhaps Sheldon is right in saying on the basis of this passage that the "highest honor among the glorified saints is ascribed to the twelve apostles,"95 It is evident that the term

⁹⁴Plummer, op. cit., p. 448.

⁹⁵Henry C. Sheldon, New Testament Theology (Second edition; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1922), p. 168.

"the twelve apostles" is used in its official sense here designating the body of the apostles as a whole. The individuals, whether the original twelve, or whether including St. Paul and others, are not thought of (cf. 1 Cor. 15:5; Jn. 20:24; Lk. 9:12). John himself would, of course, be included. But the dignity here ascribed to the Apostle St. John does not indicate that he is not the author of this statement (or of the entire Apocalypse, for that matter), when we recall that the apostles' consciousness of their fundamental importance is without a trace of presumptuousness and appears elsewhere in the New Testament (cf., 1 Cor. 4:9; 9:1; 12:28; Eph. 2:20; Mt. 19:28; Jn. 17:18,20).⁹⁶ As to the significance of the symbolism of this passage (21:14), Behm's comment is among the best. He writes:

Neu und wichtig ist der Zug, dass die durch die Tore zweifmal unterbrochene Mauer von zweif Grundsteinen getragen ist, und dass auf jedem Grundstein der Name eines Apostels Christi steht. Macht die Mauer die Stadt, so heisst das nichts anderes, als dass die Stadt selbst auf dem Grunde der Apostel aufgebaut ist (s. Eph. 2,20; Heb. 11,10; Mt. 16,18), d. h. dass die ewige Gottesstadt kein blosses Gedankengebilde ist, sondern unloeslich zusammenhaengt mit der Geschichte des Heils auf Erden: der unscheinbare Ertrag des Erdenwirkens Jesu, der Kreis der zweif Juenger als Zeugen des Evangeliums, ist das unerschuetterliche Fundament der himmlischen Gottesgemeinde.⁹⁷

The description of the City continues in magnificent pictures of its unsurpassed beauty. We lift out 21:22 for our

⁹⁶Beckwith, op. cit., p. 759.

⁹⁷Behm, op. cit., p. 109.

consideration. It is there stated: "And I [John] saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb." The cubic form of the City (21:16) suggests the Holy of Holies of the Sanctuary of the Old Covenant. Such a Sanctuary this whole City is. "The Eternal Presence (v.3) renders the new Jerusalem one vast *vaos*. . . . The Divine Presence in Itself constitutes a Sanctuary which supersedes material structures;"98 The shadow of the Old Testament has become the reality of the consummated New Testament. Notice the Testamental link in the connection between "the Lord God the Almighty," which answers to the יהוה אלmighty אלmighty אלmighty of the Old Testament, and the Lamb--God and the Lamb are its temple. "The revelation of the Old Testament finds its consummation in the Incarnate Son; the promise of God's Presence with His people is realized in the Person of the sacrificed and exalted Christ."99 Union (spiritual union?) between God, the Lamb, and the saints is the point here, as Lenski notes when he says:

The eternal union is immediate, absolutely complete. God and the Lamb are not a Sanctuary in the center of this city, to which those in the city must go to commune with them. The whole city is the Sanctuary, the whole city filled with the glorious Presence, God and the Lamb are the Sanctuary, we are in union with them, a union to which nothing can be added to all eternity.100

This spiritual relationship is exemplified further by

98 Swete, op. cit., p. 295.

99 Ibid.

100 Lenski, op. cit., p. 643.

the glory of God and the Lamb--Lamp which obviate the need for any other light any more in the City.¹⁰¹ "And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb" (21:23). Unnecessary is every other source of illumination where God and the Lamb are immediately and eternally present.¹⁰² "Gott in Christus das Licht der Welt--der johanneische Gedanke!" exclaims Behm.¹⁰³ Certainly no words could more clearly demonstrate the purely spiritual character of St. John's conception of the New Jerusalem.¹⁰⁴ Communion and fellowship of God with man appears to be the main truth portrayed in the entire description of the Heavenly City. Therein lies the restoration of the perfect Eden, the climax of the Incarnation, the end of the Kingdom of Grace, and the fulfillment of man's basic need and of the man in Christ's constant hope.

There remains for our consideration the magnificent words of 22:1-5:

Then he [an angel] showed me [John] the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. There shall no more be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb

¹⁰¹Beck, op. cit., p. 263.

¹⁰²Beckwith, op. cit., p. 763.

¹⁰³Behm, op. cit., p. 110.

¹⁰⁴Swete, op. cit., p. 295.

shall be in it, and his servants shall worship him; they shall see his face, and his name shall be on their foreheads. And night shall be no more; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they shall reign for ever and ever.

Many of the pictures here presented and the truths here enunciated we have considered in the preceding discussions. Here, if anywhere, are words which beggar comment. If even St. John strives with his God-given best to grant all men a glimpse of Eternity with God, shall we mar his noble attempt and success by paltry comments? One is tempted; and there is much of hope and consolation that one can expound from this passage. As a closing thought of this thesis we lift merely the indescribable words in 22:4: "they shall see his face," ¹⁰⁵ Here is the visio Dei, the supreme felicity, the highest blessing. The words of Stauffer on this visio Dei, which bring to bear the whole of Scripture upon it, deserve attention. He writes:

"Let me see thy face" is the favour [sic.] that Moses asked of God, the only favour, but the greatest possible. But he asked too much (Ex. 33:17ff.; 1 Tim. 6:16). But his prayer is no longer silenced. Job would sacrifice everything if only he could see God with his eyes (Job 19:26; cf. 22:26; 42:5). And the Psalmist sings that he will waken before God's likeness, and be satisfied with his glory (Ps. 17:15; cf. Midr. Ps. 4:7). "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us," says Philip (Jn. 14:8). The day is coming when God will answer the prayer of the centuries (Mt. 5:8), and then we shall see him face to face (1 Cor. 13:12; Rev. 22:4). Then we shall be satisfied. ¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵See supra, pp. 54-5, where the reference in "his" is treated.

¹⁰⁶Ethelbert Stauffer, New Testament Theology, translated from the German of the fifth edition by John Marsh (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1955), p. 230.

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