



The use of the lexeme σφάζω in the context of suffering in Revelation

PL Kayumba



Orcid.org/0000-0003-3016-2476

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree *Doctor of Philosophy in New Testament* at the North-West University

Promoter: Prof FP Viljoen

Graduation ceremony: May 2020

Student number: 25755544

ABSTRACT

The main subject this thesis investigates is *the use of σφάζω in the context of suffering in Revelation*. After several individual texts have been studied, Revelation's response to suffering evident in its use of the lexeme σφάζω is summarised in terms of its Christological, ecclesiological and therionological uses. For, in Revelation σφάζω functions as an *identity marker* for both the Lamb and its intended readers (even for the beast) within the context of suffering.

In the New Testament, the lexeme σφάζω is exclusively Johannine as he applies it twice (2x) in 1 John (3:12) and eight times (8x) in Revelation.

For John, the victim of slaughter as it is portrayed in using the lexeme σφάζω are righteous ones, i.e., the Lamb and his followers. Though it is both a biblical and historical fact that Jesus was killed by the hands of wicked men, in Revelation the lexeme σφάζω is however applied to the Lamb in a theological passive depicting God the Father as sovereignly the ultimate agent of the slaughter of His own Son (5:6, 9). It is, perhaps, for this reason, that the blood of the Lamb, which was shed as the result of the Son being slaughtered by the Father, is not avenged for in Revelation. This researcher is aware that, theologically, the latter may seem to be a contentious statement. We are, also, aware of the fact that since the Lamb is on the throne, it proves indeed that he was vindicated. However, in Revelation, God's judgment falls on 'the inhabitants of the earth' not to avenge the blood of the Lamb, but the blood of the saints.

The slaughterers of the community of faith are explicitly mentioned and are known as "the inhabitants of the earth"; hence, the blood of the saints will be avenged (18:24). Their retribution will fully take place at the end of the age (18:24). Judgment against these perpetrators of the slaughter of God's people is, therefore, delayed in this interim period but not denied (6:10 cf. 18:24). The suffering and slaughter of the followers of Jesus are not foreign and should never be perceived in that way during this interim period (6:10, 11). The community of faith in its character as a holy, apostolic and prophetic movement on earth should rather accept their traumatisation as part of who they are and as a meaningful part of their missionary work.

For John, the slaughter of the Lamb is at the heart of his worthiness, ability, competence and qualification to disclose the meaning of the scroll and to carry out its content (Rev. 5). The Lamb is worthy and qualified to unveil God's eternal plans for his people and the entire world and to execute them because he was slain, and he is the Slain Lamb. Revelation transforms the negative connotations naturally embedded in the lexeme σφάζω into excellent meanings which the community of believers should embrace.

The titles given to Jesus in Revelation demonstrate that he is the central figure (cf. Hand, 2012:102). The vast majority of those titles present Christ as the King and the Messiah of God's people. His claims are pregnant with Messianic expectations. But the Lamb symbolism is the fundamental and central piece in Revelation Christology, for it shows how best, as the King, Jesus has fulfilled the Messianic expectations.

Hence, talking of Jesus using all the other titles given to him in Revelation and leaving out the Slain Lamb imagery, is like enjoying a flight for a long time in the sky and failing to land. Only when the central piece, i.e., the Slain Lamb imagery is added to the many titles of the Messiah in Revelation, the reader would now feel like they have landed. The King performs his roles as the Lamb, who was slain. Without the imagery of Lamb as though slain, all the high expectations found in royal titles of the messiah are empty and mere talk.

The slaughter of the Lamb is the only foundational reason for the creation and existence of the Church, and for this one to turn into a kingdom and priests to serve God. All Messianic expectations embodied in the Lion imagery are consequently best met and realized in the symbolism of the slaughtered Lamb (Rev. 5). The slaughter of the Lamb, therefore, informs and is paradigmatic to the sacrifice of the Church in Revelation.

When the community of faith functions and plays her role correctly and faithfully as a kingdom and priesthood, her slaughter becomes inevitable. The suffering and the slaughter of God's people is, therefore, neither alien nor a menace to their identity, but it is instead an integral part of who they are and of who they have become because of following the Slain Lamb. Whenever a traumatic event is perceived as a threat to one's identity, which shatters one's life down, the automatic response is either a non-violent or a fierce opposition. However, Revelation in its theology of

the lexeme σφάζω presents traumatising as an identity marker rather than a menace to one's identity.

The traumatic experiences as connoted in the lexeme σφάζω define the status of both the Lamb and his followers. The meanings which are strongly tied up with the use of the lexeme σφάζω are rather beneficial to the community of faith. For this very reason, the community of believers is to accept and embrace their traumatising and that of the Lamb because they cannot perceive themselves in any way better than who they have become because of being a slaughtered Lamb and a slaughtered community. 'Being slaughtered' for the followers of Christ has value as an identity marker because it results from their holding to the testimony of Jesus. They 'accept' it as the consequence of a positive and worthwhile commitment. At the same time, they 'resist' the seductions, threats and violence of Babylon and hold on to that testimony, unlike the many (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη) who have been led astray (ἐπλανήθησαν) (see 18:23).

Besides, the researcher examines the contribution of Revelation's use of σφάζω regarding the pastoral care of African Christian believers who also experience suffering. John's use of the lexeme σφάζω provides a different but powerful structure through which God's people should react to their trauma.

[Keywords: Slaughter, Lamb, Church, Beast, Comfort, Blood, Trauma, Transformation, Healing, Victory, Rejection, Acceptance, Resistance, Redemption, Identity, Fulfil, Kingdom]

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have not been alone in this challenging journey, and I would like to express my gratitude to the many people who in one way or another have made this study possible. In particular, I would like to express much appreciation to:

- My supervisor Prof Dr Francois Viljoen for his kind and loving monitoring of this study. His constructive and challenging feedback has sharpened my academic thinking and made this study possible.
- Friends, brothers and sisters in Christ from St Mark's Church (REACH-SA) for the moral and financial supports they have provided to me in this journey.
- Jaki North for her excellent job of proofreading and editing this work free!
- African Christian University (ACU) faculty members and particularly the ACU Theology department for purchasing for me a great theological library and for their feedback, prayer, moral and financial support.

Last, but not least, I am indebted to my loving and charming wife, Susan Kalala, our two beautiful daughters, Eliel Sylvia and Jemmimah, and our amazing boy, Kohath, for their prayer, great support, patience and sacrifice.

Above all, I am grateful to my Triune God, the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit, for their enabling grace to bring this work to completion. They providentially provided all the support needed for this work.

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	2
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	5
LIST OF TABLES.....	9
CHAPTER 1: GENERAL INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY.....	10
1.1. BACKGROUND AND PROBLEM STATEMENT.....	10
1.2. THE LEXEME ΣΦΆΖΩ AND PREVIOUS SCHOLARLY WORK.	11
1.3. AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT.....	15
1.3.1. <i>Problem statement and research questions.</i>	15
1.3.2. <i>Aim of the research.</i>	15
1.3.3. <i>Objectives of the research.</i>	16
1.4. CENTRAL THEORETICAL ARGUMENT.....	16
1.5. MOTIVATION FOR THE PROJECT.....	17
1.6. RESEARCH DESIGN/METHOD.	18
1.7. CLASSIFICATION OF CHAPTERS.....	19
1.8. VALUE OF THE RESEARCH.	21
1.9. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS.....	21
CHAPTER 2: A SYNCHRONIC AND DIACHRONIC STUDY OF THE USE OF ΣΦΆΖΩ IN GREEK	22
2.1. INTRODUCTION.	22
2.2. THE SEMANTIC DOMAIN OF ΣΦΆΖΩ.	24
2.3. THE CLASSICAL GREEK USES OF ΣΦΆΖΩ.....	25
2.3.1. <i>Homer’s Iliad and Odyssey.</i>	26
2.3.2. <i>Euripides (5th century B.C.)</i>	31
2.3.3. <i>A summary table of σφάζω in Homer and Euripides.</i>	34
2.4. THE HELLENISTIC USES OF ΣΦΆΖΩ IN THE SEPTUAGINT AND ITS OT BACKGROUNDS.	35
2.4.1. <i>The ritual uses of σφάζω applied to an animal.</i>	36
2.4.2. <i>The profane uses of σφάζω applied to an animal.</i>	37
2.4.3. <i>The ritual and non-ritual uses of σφάζω applied to a human being.</i>	38
2.4.4. <i>The non-technical uses of σφάζω applied to the shekel.</i>	43
2.4.5. <i>A summary table of the meanings of σφάζω in LXX.</i>	44
2.5. THE HELLENISTIC NONBIBLICAL (OR KOINE) USES OF ΣΦΆΖΩ.....	45
2.6. THE BIBLICAL USES OF ΣΦΆΖΩ IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.	46
2.6.1. <i>A table of cognitive and related terms to the lexeme σφάζω.</i>	50
2.7. CONCLUSION.....	50
CHAPTER 3: A SURVEY OF THE OCCURRENCE OF ΣΦΆΖΩ IN REVELATION	52
3.1. INTRODUCTION.	52
3.2. RECAP OF THE DIACHRONIC STUDY OF ΣΦΆΖΩ.	53
3.3. ΣΦΆΖΩ WITHIN THE STRUCTURE OF REVELATION.	55
3.4. THE CHRISTOLOGICAL DIMENSION OF ΣΦΆΖΩ IN REVELATION.	56
3.4.1. <i>The worthiness of the Slaughtered Lamb.</i>	56
3.4.2. <i>Christ’s worthiness to unveil the concealed.</i>	58
3.4.3. <i>The basis of Christ’s worthiness.</i>	59
3.4.4. <i>The object of Christ’s victory.</i>	60
3.4.5. <i>The Father was the agent of the Son’s slaughter.</i>	62
3.4.6. <i>Jesus’ messianic titles and its Old Testament allusions.</i>	65
3.4.7. <i>The Father’s worthiness in the creation and the Son’s in redemption.</i>	66
3.4.8. <i>Christ’s event is beneficial.</i>	68

3.4.9. <i>The slaughter was Christ's very identity.</i>	71
3.4.10. <i>The lexeme σφάζω and the literary context of Rev. 4-5.</i>	72
3.5. THE ECCLESIOLOGICAL DIMENSION OF ΣΦΆΖΩ.....	74
3.5.1. <i>The slaughter of the saints in Rev 6:9-11.</i>	75
3.5.2. <i>The slaughter of the saints, considering the structure of Revelation.</i>	76
3.5.3. <i>Σφάζω and different appellations of God's people in Revelation.</i>	78
3.5.4. <i>God's people are being slaughtered as a prophetic movement.</i>	80
3.5.5. <i>The slaughter of the Church and the blood of the slaughtered Lamb.</i>	83
3.6. THE APOCALYPTICAL DIMENSION OF ΣΦΆΖΩ.....	86
3.7. THE LEXEME ΣΦΆΖΩ AND THE SOCIO-HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF REVELATION.	89
3.8. CHRISTOLOGICAL APPROACH OF ΣΦΆΖΩ INFORMS THE ECCLESIOLOGICAL.	91
3.9. CONCLUSION.....	94
CHAPTER 4: HOW THE LEXEME ΣΦΆΖΩ FITS INTO REVELATION'S DEPICTION OF JESUS	
(CHRISTOLOGICAL DIMENSION)	96
4.1. INTRODUCTION.	96
4.2. THE OVERALL CHRISTOLOGICAL CONCERNS IN REVELATION.	96
4.3. THE SLAIN LAMB IS THE CHRIST.....	99
4.3.1. <i>The Christ and his established kingdom.</i>	100
4.3.2. <i>The "already" and "not yet" of Christ's kingdom.</i>	102
4.3.3. <i>Christ and his way of establishing his kingdom.</i>	104
4.4. THE SLAIN LAMB IS THE SON OF MAN.	106
4.5. THE SLAIN LAMB IS THE SON OF GOD.	112
4.6. THE SLAIN LAMB IS THE LION OF JUDAH.	115
4.7. THE SLAIN LAMB IS THE ROOT OF DAVID.....	118
4.8. THE SLAIN LAMB IS THE KING.	123
4.9. THE SLAIN LAMB IS THE FAITHFUL WITNESS.....	126
4.10. ΣΦΆΖΩ AT THE HEART OF THE REVELATION CHRISTOLOGY.....	127
4.10.1. <i>The familiarity of some messianic titles in Rev 5.</i>	128
4.10.2. <i>The "non-familiarity" of the slain Lamb title in Rev 5.</i>	129
4.10.3. <i>The outstanding mark of the Lamb in Rev 5.</i>	130
4.10.4. <i>The analysis of Rev 5</i>	136
4.10.5. <i>A table of the plot structure of Rev 5</i>	137
4.10.6. <i>Analysis of Rev 13:8.</i>	141
4.10.7. <i>Final thoughts.</i>	144
4.11. CONCLUSION.....	145
CHAPTER 5: HOW THE LEXEME ΣΦΆΖΩ FITS INTO REVELATION'S DEPICTION OF THE CHURCH	
(ECCLESIOLOGY).....	148
5.1. INTRODUCTION.	148
5.2. THE COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS IS THE CHURCH.....	149
5.2.1. <i>John is slain in the presence of the glorified Messiah.</i>	153
5.2.2. <i>Death of Jesus as a paradigm of the death and the slaughter of the Church.</i>	154
5.3. THE COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS IS GOD'S PEOPLE.	155
5.4. THE COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS IS A HOLY APOSTOLIC AND PROPHETIC COMMUNITY.	156
5.5. THE COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS IS A COMMUNITY OF SERVANTS OF GOD.	157
5.6. THE COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS IS A COMMUNITY BEING SLAUGHTERED.	159
5.7. THE BLOOD OF THE SAINTS WILL BE AVENGED, BUT CHRIST'S WILL NOT.	161
5.8. THE THREEFOLD OCCURRENCES OF ΣΦΆΖΩ WITH THE VIEW OF THE CHURCH.....	162
5.8.1. <i>First occurrence.</i>	162
5.8.2. <i>Second occurrence.</i>	164

5.8.3. The third occurrence.	165
5.8.4. Summary of this subdivision.	166
5.9. THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS VERSUS THE SLAUGHTERING OF THE SAINTS.....	167
5.9.1. The testimony of Jesus and the mission of the Church.....	167
5.9.2. The slaughtering of the saints and Church mission.	169
5.9.3. The suffering witness of the church, her slaughter and the conversion of the nations.	173
5.10. CONCLUSION.	176
CHAPTER 6: HOW THE LEXEME ΣΦΆΖΩ FITS INTO REVELATION’S DEPICTION OF THE BEAST (THERIONOLOGICAL DIMENSION)	180
6.1. INTRODUCTION.	180
6.3. THE SLAUGHTER OF THE BEAST IN REVELATION IS A PARODY OF THE LAMB.....	183
6.3.1. A table of parallels of the Lamb and the beast.	188
6.4. THE AGENT OF THE SLAUGHTER OF THE BEAST IS GOD THE FATHER.	189
6.5. THE SURVIVAL OF THE SLAIN BEAST IS ITS VERSION OF THE RESURRECTION.	189
6.6. THE UNIVERSAL WORSHIP OF THE BEAST IS SOURCED IN ITS SLAUGHTER.	191
6.7. THE SLAUGHTER OF THE BEAST IS ITS IDENTITY MARKER.	193
6.8. THE BEAST’S IDENTITY MARKER IS RELATED TO THE MARK OF THE BEAST.	196
6.9. CONCLUSION.	198
CHAPTER 7: THE GENERAL CONCLUSION	199
7.1. INTRODUCTION.	199
7.2. OVERVIEW.	199
7.3. SUMMARY.	200
7.3.1. The classical use of the lexeme σφάζω focusing on Homer and Euripides.	200
7.3.2. The use of the lexeme σφάζω in the LXX and its OT backdrops.....	201
7.3.3. The exceptional use of the lexeme σφάζω in the Psalms.	202
7.3.4. The lexeme σφάζω in the New Testament corpora.	203
7.3.5. The three-dimensional occurrences of the lexeme σφάζω in Revelation.	204
7.3.6. The Christological use of the lexeme σφάζω in Revelation.	205
7.3.7. The ecclesiological use of the lexeme σφάζω in Revelation.	208
7.3.8. The therionological use of the lexeme σφάζω in Revelation.....	210
7.4. TENTATIVE ANSWER TO THE RESEARCH PROBLEM.	211
7.5. PASTORAL IMPLICATIONS.	214
7.5.1. Christian suffering and the sovereignty of God.....	214
7.5.2. Christian suffering transformed as a tool of comfort.....	215
WORKS CITED	219

LIST OF TABLES

2.3.3. Summary table of σφάζω in Homer and Euripides	34
2.4.5. Summary table of the meanings of σφάζω in LXX	44
2.6.1. Cognitive and related terms to the lexeme σφάζω	50
4.10.5. A table of the plot structure of Rev 5	137
6.3.1. A table of parallels of the Lamb and the beast (Rev 5 & 13)	188

CHAPTER 1: GENERAL INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY.

1.1. BACKGROUND AND PROBLEM STATEMENT.

As is the case with other apocalyptic literature, the Apocalypse of John emerged during a time of crisis. Its primary purpose was to comfort the persecuted church during a time of intense and severe oppression which started under Nero (64–68 AD) and continued under Domitian (81 AD) (cf. Osborne, 2002:6; Hendriksen, 2007:14; Beale, 1999:4-26 & Frankfurter, 2011:463).¹ In his writing, John uses images and metaphorical and symbolical language, which are often dramatic and even traumatic.² One of the words he uses to describe the death of Christ and that of his followers is σφάζω.³ This verb signifies not only killing but slaughtering, i.e., it is killing at its most violent. It can also refer to ritual or sacrificial slaughtering.

Duvall and Hays (2012:163) claim that “words are like pieces of a puzzle.” Hence, “they [words] fit together to form a story or a paragraph in a letter” (Duvall & Hays, 2012:163). For this reason, the lexeme σφάζω is worth studying. The aim of word study as pointed out by Fee (2002:79) “is to try to understand as precisely as possible what the author was trying to convey by his use of this word in this context.” Both the historical-cultural and the literary contexts of Revelation are critical in as far the use of this lexeme σφάζω is concerned.

The verb σφάζω is an important one for John that he paradoxically uses to comfort and encourage the saints of the first century. This word is exclusively used by John (cf. Bromiley ed., 1985:1126).⁴ It occurs eight times (8x) in the Apocalypse of John where it has in view either the death of Christ who is described as the Lamb or that

¹ This study does not agree with Leonard Thompson and David DE Silva, who argue that John’s issue was not that there, was too much persecution but too little (Maier, 2002:8). Still others argue that we must never take the Roman persecution as a framework of understanding the Apocalypse of John (cf. *The Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John*. Friesen, 2001:112). Our assumption for the persecution of the community of faith as a background for Revelation will be elaborated and defended.

² Regarding the writing style of apocalyptic literature in general, it is worth pointing out as Russell (1978:1) contends “The fact that the medium is in a form of writing which is stilted, exaggerated and often grotesque, should not blind us to the content of the message he is trying to convey. To demythologize is difficult at the best of times. To do so with apocalyptic literature is to attempt the impossible. Content and form belong together; message and myth are of the same stuff. To separate them is to bid farewell to a dream; and apocalyptic is made up of dreams.”

³ The verb σφάζω (“I butcher”) denotes the activity of slaying, killing by violence, slaughtering, or mortally wounding someone.

⁴ See in 1 John 3:12, and a different use of the noun in Acts 8:32, Romans 8:36 and James 5:5.

of his followers (5:6 ἐσφάγης, 9 ἐσφαγμένον, 12 ἐσφαγμένον; 6:4 σφάζουσιν, 9 ἐσφαγμένων; 13:8 ἐσφαγμένου; 18:24 ἐσφαγμένων), also known in Revelation as the Saints (cf. 13:7). However, the word occurs also once regarding the Beast (13:3).⁵ This occurrence also needs careful attention in this study. Therefore, a question related to the main problem of this study is: what could be the reason for John's use of such an evocative word (σφάζω)? And conversely: how was the negative semantic undertone of σφάζω transformed into a powerful expression for healing and consolation?

1.2. THE LEXEME ΣΦΑΖΩ AND PREVIOUS SCHOLARLY WORK.

We have considered the following scholars in this study for their contribution to the book of Revelation: Caird (1966), Wilcock (1975), Sweet (1990), Aune (1997-1998), Mounce (1988; 1997), Bauckham (1978; 1993; 1998); Beale (1999), Faley (1999), Malina & Pilch (2000), Koester (2001), Kistemaker (2007) Osborne (2002), Maier (2002), Witherington (2003), Johns (2003), Hill (2004), Hendriksen (2007), Finamore (2009), Mangina (2010), and Patterson (2012).

We should note that none of them focuses on the lexeme σφάζω, at least in as far as the reasoning and direction which this study undertakes. Their scholarly works do not thus address the problem statement of this study.

Maier (2002:8, 15), for example, deals with the subject of trauma in the Apocalypse of John, but only from a literary-critical approach, and not with the focus on the term σφάζω. We should note it that Maier's first chapter of his book, *Apocalypse Recalled* (2002), shows the complexity of the book of Revelation as far as its message is concerned. The complexity of the book is well illustrated in Luther's sentiments about it as he stated that "I miss more than one thing in this book [of Revelation], and this makes me hold it to be neither apostolic nor prophetic.... There is one sufficient reason for me not to think highly of it—Christ is not taught or known of it... I stick to the books which give me Christ clearly" (Bachmann, 1960:398, 9 cf. Maier, 2002:1). It is, therefore, no surprise that Revelation has been stereotyped by scholars as being the most challenging book in the New Testament to understand.

⁵ The beast is "wounded unto death." This study accounts for this interpretation which might clearly be perceived as not comforting but descriptive negatively. The Lamb is wounded and the beast is mortally wounded- the study has definitely shown which is which. Nevertheless, when the lexeme σφάζω is given to the beast (13:3), the intention is to depict the antagonist of God's people as the parody of the Lamb.

Despite the interpretive challenges posed by the book of Revelation, we must approach it looking at its stylistic nature, as we do with any book in the Bible, through various methods and by taking the peculiarity of its genre into consideration. While there was a consensus on how to exegete Revelation a century ago, this is no longer entirely the case (Maier, 2002:10). Maier summarizes the diverse approaches to the book within academia. Some scholars read it from a liberationist perspective. To them, the interpretation becomes more psychological, and they read “Revelation’s vanquishing of God’s enemies ‘as part of a process for containing aggressive feelings,’ to help Christians harassed by their faith and thus doubting their election as God’s people to cope with the anti-Roman sentiments” (Maier, 2002:8). According to Maier, these scholars would argue that John’s Apocalyptic myth of Rome’s demise helped persecuted Christians “overcome unwelcome contradictions between hope and reality, between what ought to be and what is, between an idea of past or future and flawed present” (Maier, 2002:8).⁶

Other methodologies surveyed by Maier (2002:10) are narrative, feminist, rhetorical, ideological, sociological, historical, and redactional approaches to Revelation.⁷ For this study, as stated below, narrative, socio-historical (Fiorenza, 1991) whose works are also rhetorical, and semantic studies (Silva, 1983) will be addressed as the researcher approaches the book of Revelation.

Alongside Maier, it is worth briefly discussing Malina (1993) and Hill (2004), respectively. Malina is interesting because of his particular view on the concept of

⁶ Interestingly, Maier (2002:08) mentions others, like Leonard, Thompson and David DeSilva, who contest such readings, arguing instead that John’s problem was not that there was too much persecution, but too little: “certainly the attempt to link the book of Revelation with upheaval and crisis is wrong-headed” (Maier, 2002:8). For such readings, “It is not an attempt of John the seer to console the churches...The Apocalypse is a social challenge to the seven churches to maintain their liminal status against mounting external pressure” (Maier, 2002:8).

⁷ With the use of narrative criticism, this study basically interprets the text from the perspective of an idealized *implied reader* of Revelation who is presupposed by and constructed from the text itself (Powell, 1990:15). In as far as the ideological study is concerned, Yee (2004:345) explains that “in its broadest sense, ideological criticism examines ideology at work in three variables of biblical interpretation: the author, the text and the reader.” Coming to redactional criticism, Perrin (1970:1) maintains, “It is concerned with studying the theological motivation of an author as this is revealed in the collection, arrangement, editing and modification of traditional material, and in the composition of new material or the creation of new forms within the traditions of early Christianity. Feminist approach is here understood as an interpretation from “a movement committed to women’s self-determination and to fashion a humane alternative to prevailing male-dominated political and social structures (Phillips, 2004:371).

the Lamb as slain in Revelation. His approach is socio-scientific, which this study rarely agrees with. As for Hill, the researcher builds on his work. Hill discusses critical topics which are relevant to this study.

For Bruce J. Malina (1993), an appropriate way of understanding biblical texts, and especially the Apocalypse of John, is to avoid the pitfalls of anachronism and ethnocentrism by using an approach which considers the social organisations and historical backdrop of the author and his readers. Hence, for him and his fellow members of the Context Group, social-scientific criticism is a justified approach to the Apocalypse of John (cf. Malina, 1995:3–12). According to this approach, a written text cannot mean something other than what it meant within its cultural, historical, and social system. Though there is some value in this approach, the author of this study does not accept Malina's submission, at least as far as his method to Revelation is concerned.⁸ The other reason this study does not agree with the social-scientific approach is that it uses modern interpretive sociological theories that are often insensitive to the culture of the first century (cf. footnotes 8).

Many of Malina and Pilch's submissions which are founded on ancient astrology and *ars mathematica*, and are used for exegetical answers in Revelation are unconvincing (cf. *Social-Science Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, 2000). For example, regarding their interpretation of passages as celestial identifiers, this study agrees with Skemp as he argues that they are unconvincing (2001: 758). For Malina and Pilch, "a Lamb standing as if it had been slaughtered" is Aries, the "sky lamb"; only a being with a broken neck could have its head turned directly backwards as celestial Aries does" (2000: 89, 93, 171).

To support their claims, the authors quote the first-century Latin poet Manilius, 'Aries looks backwards admiringly at Taurus' (Skemp, 2001:757 cf. Malina & Pilch, 2000: 89). To refute Malina and Pilch's submission on the 'Lamb standing as if it had been slaughtered,' Skemp (2001: 757, 8) reasonably maintains that "the poet, however, does not refer to Aries with a broken neck; nor do M. and P. show that ancients viewed Aries that way. M. and P. further insist (p.171) that the phrase ἀρνίου ... από

⁸ "Social-scientific criticism, in its broadest sense, applies methods and theories to biblical texts in an attempt to reconstruct the social worlds behind the texts (e.g. ancient Israel) while simultaneously illuminating the lives of the people living in these worlds" (Steinberg, 2004:275-279).

καταβολής κόσμου (13:8) pertains to the Lamb, not to those written in the book, so the Lamb was 'slaughtered before the foundation of the world.' Besides the problem that the preposition από does not bear the sense 'before,' the Christological and soteriological ramifications of the interpretation are not explained.”

Again, Duff (2001: 631) reminds us that in introducing Malina and Pilch's book, two avenues of exploration are pointed to, i.e. the social-scientific analysis of John's world and the Hellenistic understanding of astronomy/astrology. These avenues were suggestively meant to offer evidence of the overturning of the conventional understanding of the Apocalypse. “Unfortunately, neither path of investigation succeeds,” argues Duff (2001:631). Duff continues and somewhat shows that “the social-scientific investigation fails because it hardly exists in the book” (2001:631).

This study presupposes the suffering of the community of faith through persecution. This suffering could be political or a more general Christian opposition. We base this presupposition on the social-historical background at the time of the writing of Revelation. However, based on their social-scientific lens, Malina and Pilch do not appear to account for this facet of interpretation. For them, “there is no great concern about persecution, political or otherwise” (2001:66). They further argue “that the author of the book may have been exiled to Patmos for practising Astral prophecy is plausible” (2000:66). Hence, “Malina and Pilch do not shy away from the unconventional,” says Skemp (2001:758).

Hill (2004) picks up the notion of the slain Lamb but with the purpose of expounding the atonement theology in the book of Revelation. Hill (2004:190) argues that “the imagery of a sacrificial Lamb not only becomes a leading aspect of its portrayal of Jesus but also plays a dominant role in the book as a whole.” For Hill, the dominant role of the image is to signal the atonement Jesus achieved for the saints. It means that the metaphor of the slain Lamb denotes the appeasing of God's wrath and the satisfying of his justice. The result is, therefore, the reconciliation with God of those who trust in Christ's redemptive work. Hence, the framework for the atonement theology in Revelation is doxology, according to Hill (2004:190).

He makes an essential link between Christ and his church showing how Christology enlightens ecclesiology in Revelation. Hill (2004:199) contends that “the image of

‘the Lamb, looking as if it had been slain,’ retains its relevance and power for the ongoing life of the church in a hostile world.” This study builds on the work of Hill.

1.3. AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT.

1.3.1. Problem statement and research questions.

Having put into perspective the aforementioned scholarly work on Revelation, and articulated a glimpse of the contributions of both Malina and Hill, their contributions, primarily upon the theme of atonement, are insightful. However, a reasonable appraisal of their findings raises the important question which remains unanswered with greater clarity: *what does it mean for a wounded Church that the One at the centre of the heavenly throne is presented as the Lamb looking as slain?*

In connection with the central problem of this study, the following are the questions, which are essential to this study:

- (1) How did the lexeme σφάζω develop and evolve, especially in the canonical writings?
- (2) How was the lexeme σφάζω understood in Greco-Roman times, particularly in Revelation?
- (3) How does the lexeme σφάζω fit into the depiction of Jesus, the church and the Beast, respectively?
- (4) What potential of comfort and healing to suffering believers can be gained from the evocative thoughts on the lexeme σφάζω? Or as pointed out earlier, how was the experience of slaughtering transformed into a powerful expression of healing and comfort?

1.3.2. Aim of the research.

This inquiry aims at grasping and comprehending the use of the distressing lexeme σφάζω in the Apocalypse of John in relation to Christ and the community of God’s people.

1.3.3. Objectives of the research.

The thesis wants to achieve the following objectives:

- (1) Identify the synchronic and the diachronic semantic uses of σφάζω, particularly concerning Christ and the church.
- (2) Investigate and evaluate the occurrence of σφάζω and its use in Revelation.
- (3) Investigate and test how the lexeme σφάζω fits into the depiction of Jesus, the church and the Beast, respectively.
- (4) Study the significance of the Christological and soteriological dimensions of σφάζω in how it spiritually informs and equips the wounded ones.

1.4. CENTRAL THEORETICAL ARGUMENT.

At this stage, it is worth highlighting some significant facts on the Apocalypse of John raised by Maier. The theoretical argument for this study is considerably derived from this analysis of Maier. The Apocalypse, as Maier argues, has stirred up trouble in politics. Both the English and French revolutionaries had been fired up by the desire for an early realisation of Jerusalem the Golden (2002:2). For Maier (2002:2) the Apocalypse fanned the flame of the American Revolution. Maier (2002:3) claims that *wherever there is historical trouble, scratch the surface and you are likely to find the Apocalypse* [emphasis mine]. He (2002:3) fairly submits that “it will be simplistic to see the book of Revelation as the sole driving force on each of these instances. But it will be imprudent to ignore it” (2002:3).

The central theoretical argument of this study is therefore that in Revelation, the driving force behind the lexeme σφάζω denoting in slaughtering was not intended to traumatise the original audience but to heal their trauma and give them lasting hope. It is this paradox that makes this study exciting and worthy of investigation. Using σφάζω in the Apocalypse of John has a divine potential to ease the suffering of the Church and heal her trauma.

Though whatever is conjoined with the term σφάζω is loaded and evocative, John does not hesitate to present and describe the Hero of the book as the Slain Lamb. A

grasp of John's depiction of suffering and death of both the Lamb and the saints will appreciate that in Revelation the term σφάζω serves as an identity marker for both Christ and his Church. *Its referent is therefore transformed into a powerful tool for victory, healing and coping with any human suffering.* For this cause, the denotative and connotative meaning of σφάζω becomes something the community of faith should embrace and celebrate as it is a sign of victory and strength rather than of defeat and helplessness. The Christological dimension of σφάζω in Revelation, therefore, informs its ecclesiological aspect.

The researcher, hence, assumes that the fact that John presents the Lamb on the throne as slain implies that the trauma and terrible death of Christ should be something his readers embrace and rejoice over. Hence, the image of the slain Lamb and church has a pastoral function. Suffering and death, thus, become integral parts of Christian identity that enable Christians experiencing pain to persevere.

1.5. MOTIVATION FOR THE PROJECT.

The Apocalypse of John has always been one of my favourite books of the New Testament corpus. I have read, taught and preached through it countless times. I have also been involved in training ministers and church leaders who have no formal theological training. Most of them are distressed, being refugees from Burundi, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. In my interaction with them, they shared with me their painful stories, and I wrestled with relating their own tragic experiences with the sovereignty and goodness of God.

This researcher understands that the overall message of the book of Revelation is to facilitate the spiritual and emotional healing of the suffering churches in first-century Asia-Minor. These churches underwent severe persecution under the rule of the Roman Empire during the early years of their existence. I thus contend that the primary purpose of John's Apocalypse, in line with the assertion of Hendriksen (2007:7), "is to comfort the militant church in its struggle against the forces of evil. It is full of help and comfort for persecuted and suffering Christians." For this reason, I believe that the main research problem of this thesis applies to my context.

1.6. RESEARCH DESIGN/METHOD.

This study uses over one method. It first makes use of **narrative criticism as** Bowman (2007) works it out in *Judges & the Method because Revelation* consists mostly of narrative (cf. Collins, 1997:9). On this Barr (2013:50) maintains that “[o]ne of the distinguishing features of an apocalypse is its narrative framework: each tells a story.”⁹ Employing narrative criticism, the thesis, therefore, works explicitly with the three worlds relating to this text, that is its narrative world (the world in the text); the referential world (the world behind the text); and the contextual world (the context of the text’s intended, hearers/readers). We base this approach on presuppositions (that are engaged with during the study) including concepts such as the final text of Revelation functioning as a coherent narrative. An analysis of its literary features can thus reveal its interpretive focus. Revelation, therefore, has apart from circumstances relating to its compositional process, the historical reality behind its stories, or the interpretive agenda of the reader, literary integrity (cf. Bowman, 2007:19).

Second, this study supplements narrative criticism with a **semantic study** (cf. Louw, 1982, Barr, 1961 and Cotterell & Turner 1989) of the verb *σφάζω*. This method entails that it focuses on and be concerned with not only the meaning(s) of the word but also with the structure of the meaning of *σφάζω* (Louw, 1982:2). This approach, therefore, concerns the relationship between the signifier—*σφάζω*—and what it stands for, its denotation (cf. Cotterell & Turner, 1989:37).¹⁰

Third, the researcher uses a **socio-historical approach** (Botha, 1990 and Keener, 2000, 2012). At this stage, the study considers the first-century context and events as essential in understanding the meaning of the text. The events are thus not to be disregarded as a “background” that is detached from the search for meaning. Hence, this approach should not be confused with the social-scientific method which

⁹ “‘Apocalypse’ is a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world” (Collins, 1979:9).

¹⁰ Silva 1983, Louw & Nida, 1988, is consulted

often engages with a text historically (see Botha, 1990, Van Rensburg, 2005, and Keener, 2000 & 2012).¹¹

In dealing with key passages the study attempts to discover what they contribute to the understanding of trauma as it relates to the lexeme σφάζω, and how they transform the language(s) of trauma into something fruitful such as wisdom and care, prophecy and healing.

The Apocalypse of John is, usually, approached through four (4) main schools of interpretation: the historicist (Revelation is being fulfilled as history written beforehand), preterist (the prophetic message of Revelation has nothing to do with the future and is thus a message directed to the first-century believers), futurist (most of the book [4–22] concerns the future after the so-called rapture of the church except 1–3 which has to do with our time or spiritual/symbolic lens).

This study mostly follows **parallelist approach**. The parallelist approach assumes and advocates for the fact that there is no single fulfilment. There are, nevertheless, only transcendent principles and recurrent themes in Revelation (Gregg, 1997: 43).¹² Hence, this reading is spiritual/idealist with some preterist or historicist elements (Gregg, 1997: 45).¹³

1.7. CLASSIFICATION OF CHAPTERS.

We structure the study as follows:

Chapter (1). Introduction and methodology. The introduction presents the motivation for the study, the research question, the outline, the methodology and the introduction to Revelation as a book.

¹¹ In social-scientific method, the interpretive task is executed using a modern sociological interpretive grid or theories that are insensitive to the culture and context of the first century (cf. Botha, 1990, De Klerk, B. J. & Van Rensburg, 2005, Keener, 2000 & 2012).

¹² cf. Hendriksen, 2007.

¹³ This approach is called an *eclectic* approach to reading Revelation, by Hay and Duvall (2012: 406). They argue that it is “an approach that seeks to combine the strengths of several of the above approaches. Revelation certainly seems to address the first Christians directly. We should read Revelation the same way that we read every other book of the Bible — by taking its historical context seriously. Revelation also presents timeless truths for surviving the struggle between good and evil. The visions of Revelation challenge us to forsake our complacency and to stay faithful during times of persecution. Moreover, this book certainly has something to say about events still to come. Some events it describes await future fulfilment (e.g., the return of Christ, the great white throne judgment, and the arrival of the holy city).”

Chapter (2). After the introduction, the research undertakes **a diachronic and a synchronic semantic study of the use of σφάζω in Greek**. Here the study investigates the use of σφάζω in the Old Testament (LXX), and in selected, Jewish and Greco-Roman texts to determine the influence thereof on Revelation. In short, the study analyses the Greek semantic elements of the usage of the word σφάζω in Revelation.

Chapter (3). Next, **a survey of the occurrence of σφάζω in Revelation** is undertaken in this chapter, and the study identifies how the term qualifies Jesus (Christological dimension), the Saints (ecclesiological dimension), and the Beast (therionological dimension)¹⁴ and how this connects to the socio-historical context of Revelation. This chapter also studies the important part σφάζω plays in the redeeming work of Christ and how it informs and changes the Christians' view of suffering (Christological approach informs the ecclesiological).

Chapter (4). This chapter studies **how the lexeme σφάζω fits into Revelation's depiction of Jesus (Christology)**. Here a narrative approach to describing the Christology of Revelation is utilised.

Chapter (5). This chapter analyses how **the lexeme σφάζω fits into Revelation's depiction of the church (ecclesiology)**. It uses a narrative approach to describe the ecclesiology of Revelation.

Chapter (6). This chapter investigates **how the lexeme σφάζω fits into Revelation's depiction of the Beast**. Here again, a narrative approach is used to describe the nature of evil, according to Revelation.

Chapter (7). **The conclusion** presents the pastoral implications of Revelation's use of σφάζω concerning Jesus and the Church. Here the study summarises the findings of the inquiry and attempts to answer the research question by discussing the role and meaning of σφάζω within John's central thesis. At this stage, some pastoral implications of the research are also expanded upon.

¹⁴ The researcher has come up with the word "therionology" as a compound word (therion = beast and logos = study of) to mean the doctrine or study of the beast

1.8. VALUE OF THE RESEARCH.

The value of this work lies in the sense that because of the rising of conflict, violence, wars, and political unrest particularly in Africa, there is a growing concern for a message of healing, hope, encouragement and of consolation. This study wants to contribute to the current evangelical academic debate over how to respond to the phenomenon of trauma from the perspective of the Apocalypse of John. It concludes by attempting to formulate a responsible, pastoral approach to the reading of the Apocalypse of John to assist traumatized Christians. In this way, it wants to engage with and addresses the day-to-day life of those in need of healing from trauma within the African context.

1.9. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

The emphasis of this study is on literature review and textual analysis. Hence the ethical risk is minimal, too low. All sources used are referred to, and due effort is made to articulate the viewpoints of various scholars as balanced and fair as possible. We use no inflammatory or stereotypical language. This study does not include any interviews, nor engage in empirical studies of either a quantitative or qualitative nature.

CHAPTER 2: A SYNCHRONIC AND DIACHRONIC STUDY OF THE USE OF ΣΦΆΖΩ IN GREEK

2.1. INTRODUCTION.

This chapter aims at applying synchronic and diachronic analyses to the lexeme σφάζω in Greek to determine and comprehend its uses, meaning and significance in Revelation. Here, we are interested in learning what people in the first century AD meant and thought whenever they used this verb. The researcher is also involved in investigating what slaughtering practices associated with this term were occurring in John's day. This study will journey through the four stages of a historical and synchronic study of σφάζω in Greek.¹⁵ The last phase which focuses mostly on the synchronic study of σφάζω in Revelation will be omitted from this chapter to be tackled at length in the following chapter- *a survey of the occurrence of σφάζω in Revelation*.

This analysis is crucial because “words can be studied historically by examining how they have been used in the past and how they have changed in meaning through time” (Bock, 2006:141, 142). Besides, this exercise is essential, for it will help us find out the different meanings of σφάζω, and so, eventually, we will propose which one (s) of those meanings if there is one best fit into the context of particular texts in which the term is used. Diachronic and synchronic analyses as Talstra (1993:84) succinctly adduces “are used if not to meet the challenge posed by the frequent talk of the complementarity of the exegetical methods.” The synchronic description takes priority over the diachronic one. This has been emphasised by many linguists and so far, has never been disproved.¹⁶ The crucial thing relates to what σφάζω means within the specific writings of John, particularly in Revelation. Thus, as Bock (2006:142) puts it, synchronic analysis of the word is “perhaps the most crucial phase of lexical analysis since the meaning of a word within its specific context, either temporal or literary, is the interpreter's major concern.” Besides, Talstra (1993:83, 4) reminds us that “the terminology of ‘operational priority’ of synchronic

¹⁵ The four stages are: the classical Greek uses of σφάζω, the Hellenistic uses of σφάζω in the Septuagint and its OT backgrounds, the Hellenistic nonbiblical (or koine) uses of σφάζω, the biblical uses of σφάζω in the New Testament (cf. footnotes 2).

¹⁶ “... the historical past of a word is not a reliable guide to its present meaning. No reasonable person will question this claim. Yet no reasonable person will wish to maintain that the original or etymological meaning of a word (when it is discoverable) cannot, in any circumstances, assist our understanding of its present semantic value” (Hill, 1967:3, 4).

analysis over diachronic was Ranzin's." He elaborates that the term *operational* is to be emphasised "for the point is not that synchrony is fundamentally privileged above the diachronic. The operational priority of the synchronic analysis means only that the first reads of a text as a unity, in an attempt to establish the structure of the meaning of the whole and the contribution of the constituent part of the text to the total meaning" (1993:83, 4).

Diachronic is well known as the historical study of a language, whereas synchronic is the geographical study of the language. In this, the attempt will thus first be to identify the different stages in which the term was historically used. Once the stages are identified, this study will find out whether the meaning of σφάζω remained the same in these stages or not.¹⁷ Is there any chronological progression in the use of the term under consideration—σφάζω? This question is central to this section. In what sense or senses was it possible for John who lived in the last period of the first century AD to use σφάζω?

It appears as demonstrated that the fundamental meaning(s) of σφάζω throughout these stages does not change, but the term evolves only where its *application* is concerned. By the first century AD, as we look at its semantic development, the verb σφάζω could also mean to torment or to persecute even though death was not envisioned. Picking up the reasoning in the study of words, we could ask questions such as, what are the meanings of σφάζω? What are the various ideas which the writers of this time were using it to express? And what is its actual purpose in the passages of Revelation?

These two studies of language, i.e. diachronic and synchronic, as contended by Cotterell & Turner (1989:25, 26), are vital to us, for they warn us against two errors in studying words. In connection with our study of the lexeme σφάζω, this means they will notify us against the mistake of thoughtlessly explaining John's use of the word by reference to other writers' use of the 'same' word, and the error in defining John's use of the word by reference to how it was used by someone else yet at a different time (cf. Cotterell & Turner, 1989:25, 26). To put this differently, synchronically, we

¹⁷ Bock (2006:133-153) suggests four stages in the lexical analysis and studies in words: Diachronic stage 1 which deals with the classical uses of a word; the diachronic stage 2 deals with the Hellenistic uses (LXX); the diachronic stage 3 which is also the synchronic stage 1 focusing on the Hellenistic nonbiblical (or Koine) uses of a word; and lastly, the diachronic stage 4 which is the synchronic stage 2 and deals with the Biblical uses (NT).

would examine all how the word σφάζω is used at a particular point in time, i.e. in the first century, in John's time, especially in Revelation. Then diachronically we would want to see how its meaning had shifted, if at all it did, over the centuries, from the time it was initially used, to a time when its meaning had shifted (cf. Cotterell & Turner, 1989:25). For this reason, the following corpora will thus be assessed, the LXX and some extra-biblical Hellenistic Greek. This approach is because, "... no study of a word in the New Testament is adequate without investigation of its use and meaning in the literature of classical Greek and later pre-New Testament Greek, especially the Septuagint" (Hill, 1967:19). It is, however, worth pointing out as advised by Cotterell & Turner (1989:26) that "these comparisons may be interesting, suggestive, illuminating, puzzling, but they must always be made with care. Synchronically or diachronically language is non-homogeneous."

2.2. THE SEMANTIC DOMAIN OF ΣΦΑΖΩ.

Let us start our analysis by pointing out that the verb σφάζω is according to Louw & Nida (1988:228) in the semantic domain of *violence, harm, destroy* and kill. This domain, according to Louw & Nida (1988:228) "focuses upon *physical harm in contrast with psychological harm*, which may be caused by persons or circumstances. In this domain of physical harm, the causative agents may likewise be either animate beings or inanimate forces" [my emphasis]. This lexeme fits particularly in the sub-domain of kill (cf. 1988:235). Louw & Nida (1988:235-238) list 29 other Greek verbs in the sub-domain of a kill.

The lexemes which are thus closely related in both denotation and connotation to σφάζω are θύω, κατασφάζω, σφαγή (Louw & Nida, 1988:236). It is therefore essential to take note that a *deliberate death* caused through violence and mercilessness is a *common component which* can be regarded or sensed as binding the meanings of the lexemes (θύω, κατασφάζω and σφαγή) which are strictly related to and fall in the same sub-domain of meaning with σφάζω (cf. Louw, 1982:33). A calculated death is often envisaged in using σφάζω. This calculation is usually correct, though as noted earlier, in its evolvement, σφάζω could also figuratively mean *to torment* or *to persecute without* resulting in death. To kill is a common denominator and can be regarded as a *general meaning*, especially when it involves violence and mercilessness.

Most people would first think of and associate *slaughtering* of especially an animal in *ritual* when the word σφάζω is heard. Hence, butchering or slaughtering is the *common meaning* of σφάζω (cf. Louw, 1982:34). Slaughtering is the meaning which is *central* to the experience of the first readers of John in the early century. Killing a beast for sacrificial purposes is a *technical meaning* of σφάζω (Bromiley ed. 1985:1125).

Linguistically, it would sound incorrect to say that σφάζω means 'I slay,' 'I butcher' or 'I slaughter', instead we should say 'I slay' or 'I slaughter' is one item that could be designated by using the word σφάζω i.e., that σφάζω can mean 'I slay' or 'I slaughter' or even 'I butcher' (cf. Louw, 1982:40). Therefore, semantically, σφάζω falls in the domain of physical killing as opposed to psychological harm. Violent extermination of life is always intended, be it, that of a human being or that of an animal. The tool utilised to kill is often a slaughter sacrificial knife or a sword. Anything can be used so long as the killing is atrocious and violent, especially in non-ritual slaughter.

2.3. THE CLASSICAL GREEK USES OF ΣΦΪΖΩ.

Regarding the classical period, the basic definitions for this verb as we find them in the lexicons are: (1) slay, slaughter properly by cutting the throat; (2) generally, slay, murder and kill of human victims; (3) of any slaughter by knife or sword; (4) of animals, tear by the throat (5) of any killing; (6) metaph. torment.¹⁸ Within some classical writings, specifically Homer and Euripides, σφάζω describes religious (sacred, ritual) murders and a profane term which could apply to either animals or human beings. Using σφάζω in the classical period always implies a violent killing with a knife or a sword and most frequently by cutting the throat. It was never used metaphorically.

Tübingen (1971:927) describes σφάζω as both religious and profane slaying in the classical period. Regarding religious slaying, he first highlights instances where meat offerings were sacrificed to the Olympian Gods, where the flesh is eaten. However, he determines that there are also instances of meat and festal offerings where the flesh is not eaten but set aside (1971:928).

¹⁸ Liddell & Scott Lexicon (1996: 1787, 8), Arndt & Gingrich Lexicon (1958:796) , and Danker Lexicon (1979:979)

The latter occurs for various reasons—the sacrifice either removes a curse as an expiation or the sacrifice has analogous power as an oath sacrifice, or even the recipient of the sacrifice claims the whole animal as an offering to heroes, to chthonic powers or for mantic purposes before dangerous enterprises.

Tübingen points out that this type of sacrifice where the flesh is not eaten but set aside is a by-product of the original intention of the killing, which was to produce blood. With several examples from Homer, Euripides and others, Tübingen points out that the physical action of slaying described by the term is usually a stabbing or a slitting of the throat (1971:926). Tübingen argues that “in exceptionally dangerous crises when the very existence of the state was threatened men were offered as σφάγια in Greece and Rome, as we learn from both legend and history” (1971:928).

About the profane use of the term, with some example from Euripides and Aristotle, Tübingen signals that “σφάζω may be used for the way a wolf falls on its prey and kills it” (1971:929). Picking up a few examples from some classic Greek literature, one entry under the profane slaying of a man, Tübingen points out that “it is a vivid and grisly expression for murder” (1971:929). He highlights various nuances of the term that may be caught— gruesomeness, undeserved fate, criminality, the murder of kin and massacre after taking a city (1971:929). “The animal’s throat is slit with a knife (σφαγίς, μάχαιρα, ξίφος) and the blood pours out. The cutting is usually called σφάζειν” (Tübingen, 1971: 927).

2.3.1. Homer’s Iliad and Odyssey.

That the NT writers might have engaged with the Homeric writings of the 8th century B.C. has been well argued and shown by Phillips.¹⁹ Homer’s epics apply to our theological discussion of the NT. This serves as a rationale behind the choice of the Homeric epics among the many classic Greek writings in this section. John, the apostle is one of the NT writers who have extensively engaged with some ideas of the Homeric worldviews as inculcated in the Iliad and Odyssey.²⁰ Taking on John as

¹⁹ Cf. Phillips, (2013:390-397).

the canonical writer of Revelation, the Homeric epics, particularly the Iliad and Odyssey, are worth looking at in the lexeme's analysis under consideration.

Ironically, in the literature which encourages violence as a way of protecting one's name and glory, none of the occurrences of σφάζω in Homer has the killing of a human being in view. In Homer, σφάζω is used to mean the *cutting* of the *throats* of cattle. These animals are offered mostly by warriors in ritual to the gods, often with a thanksgiving prayer for a victory or a prayer of petition to manipulate the gods to destroy their foes amid battle.

2.3.1.1. Homer's Iliad (8th century B.C.)

The verb σφάζω occurs five (5x) times in the *Iliad*. The following are the occurrences of the lexeme and both its connotation and denotation in the Iliad.

They use the first occurrence of σφάζω in the Iliad in the sense of “cutting the throat” of the victim. The killing happens as a ritual in propitiation. It involves prayer. They slaughter the animals to appease the lord Apollo, who brought on the Argives woes and lamentations. The term means cutting the throats of the victims. As we read, “[S]o, he spoke in prayer, and Phoebus Apollo heard him. Then when they had prayed and sprinkled the barley grains, they first drew back the victims' heads, and *cut* their *throats* (ἔσφαξαν), and flayed them, and cut out the thigh pieces and enclosed them inside layers of fat and laid raw flesh on them” (Il., 1, 459).²¹ The second quote in the Iliad is “[t]hen when they had prayed and had sprinkled the barley grains, they first drew back the victims' head, and *cut* their *throats* (ἔσφαξαν), and flayed them, and cut their pieces and enclosed them inside layers of fat, and laid raw flesh on them” (Il., 2, 422). The action denoted in using σφάζω is here done in prayer to Zeus by Agamemnon, lord of men on behalf of all the Trojan people to escape from death and the tumult of war. The victims, bulls (not men) had their throats cut in a ritual to the gods so they may grant them victory over Hector and his army. The third occurrence has to do with the utterance of Achilles of the Achaeans, “[m]y fellows to be sure and my kins people stood around me and with many prayers sought to keep me there in the halls, and many noble sheep and sleek cattle of

²⁰ To substantiate this claim, see Phillips' submission on how the New Testament writers engaged with the Homeric epics (2013:393).

²¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all English translations for both the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are by Murray, A. T. from the LOEB Classical Library, 1999.

shambling gait did they *slaughter* (ἔσφαζον), and many swine, rich with fat, were stretched to singe of the flame of Hephaestus, and wine in plenty was drunk from the jars of that old man” (Il., 9, 467). Here a ritual was performed by Achilles’s kins people to keep him in the halls of his angered-father. His father was angry with him because Achilles’ mother begged him continually to sleep with his father’s concubine so that his father might be hateful in her eyes. Achilles obeyed. But when his father learned of his deceit, he cursed Achilles, and the gods fulfilled his curse (Il., 9, 450–461).

It is interesting, as said earlier, that Homer does not use σφάζω when he has the killing of a human being in view. Whenever there is an act denoting such action, both in the Iliad and Odyssey, Homer uses an entirely different verb such as κατακτάμεν. Hence, in Homer, σφάζω is *exclusively* reserved to refer to the cutting of the throats or the killing of animals frequently in a ritual setting. Thus, whenever the word is used in the *Iliad and Odyssey*, what comes to mind is neither the killing nor the trauma of humans. It is always the death of animals offered in sacrifice to the gods for various purposes.

Ironically, though the Iliad *advocates* for violence, this violent word is never used to describe the killing of people. Only animals’ slaughtering deserves to be related to that term in Homer’s epics. For instance, Achilles is quoted to be saying in the same context that “then I formed a plan to *slay* (κατακτάμεν) [we defeat] him with a sword” (Il., 9, 458). Having the killing of Achilles’ father in view, Homer uses a different verb (κατακτάμεν) which could denote an idea of conquering. The fourth occurrence of the verb σφάζω in the Iliad, “[m]any sleek bulls bellowed about the knife as they were *slaughtered* (σφαζόμενοι), many sheep and bleating goats and many white-tusked swine, rich with fat, were stretched to singe over the flame of Hephaestus; and everywhere about the corpse the blood run so that one might dip cups in it” (Il., 23, 31). This ritual was done in the so-called funeral feast to satisfy the hearts of the people. It is on this occasion that bulls’ *throats* were *cut*. It was in the jubilation of their victory and humiliation over the Trojans.

Remarkably again, in this same context, Homer uses a different Greek verb (ἀποδειροτήσειν) to denote the slaying of a human being and reserves σφάζω for the slaughtering of animals. This use is clear in the words of the son of Peleus, who

was the leader in the violence of lamentation. When the throats of human beings (Hector and the son of the Trojans) are meant to be cut, the lexeme in question is not used but a different verb (ἀποδειροτμήσειν) (Il., 23, 20 -25). The last occurrence of the term in the Iliad, “[a]t that swift Achilles sprung up, and *slew* (σφάξ’) a white fleeced sheep, and his comrades flayed it and made it ready well and in good order, and sliced skilfully and spat the morsels, and roasted them carefully and drew everything off the spits” (Il., 24, 622). Tübingen points out that “[y]et the Gks. of Homer’s day did not link all slaying with an offering” (1971:929). The context is the death of Niobe’s sons and her misery. Here again, as always, it is the slaughtering of animals in a ritual that Homer uses the lexeme. However, talking about the sons of Niobe, the sons Apollo *slew* with shafts from his silver bow, Homer uses a different word (πέφνεν) as opposed to the lexeme in question (cf. Il., 24, 600).

2.3.1.2. Homer’s *Odyssey* (8th Century B.C.)

Σφάζω occurs ten times (10x) in the *Odyssey*. Everything said about the lexeme, i.e. its denotation and its connotation in the Iliad of Homer also applies in his *Odyssey*. The lexeme means killing and to be specific, cutting off the throat but only used of cattle. Here are some quotes to substantiate this claim. “But, as for me, I will go to Ithaca, that I may the more arouse his son, and set courage in his heart to call to an assembly the long-haired Achaeans, and speak his word to all the suitors, who continue to *slay* (σφάζουσι) his thronging sheep and his spiral-horned shambling cattle” (Od., 1, 92). The term is used to mean the slaughtering of cattle.

With the purpose of rejoicing the goddess, the ritual of slaughtering an animal is performed by the leader of the group, “[t]hen the men raised the heifer’s head from the broad-wayed earth and held it, and Peisistratus, leader of the men, *cut the throats* (σφάζουσι)” (Od., 3, 454 cf. 3, 437, 438). It is always in ritual, and the victims are still animals in both the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.

Coming to a request made by Telemachus to Menelaus who is in search of the news about his father, these words we read, “[m]y home is being devoured and my rich hands are ruined; my house is filled with men that are foes, who continue *to slay* (σφάζουσι) my *thronging sheep and* my spiral-horned cattle of shambling gait—the suitors, these, of my mother, overweening in their insolence” (Od., 4, 320).

These are the words of Odysseus, “[t]here much wine was drunk, and many sheep they *slew* (ἔσφαζον) by the shore, and spiral-horned cattle of shambling gait” (Od., 9, 46). To express the killing of an animal, Homer uses σφάζω, however, in the same context, we are told that some men were slain (cf. Od., 9, 39-40 “ὤλεσα), in this, Homer, as in the Iliad, uses a different verb. But in “many *sheep they slew* by the shore,” It is the lexeme that is used. In the inquiring to the gods with the strengthless heads of the dead, it is recorded that “[t]here upon call to your comrades, and bid them flay and burn the sheep that lie there, *slain* (ἔσφαγμένα) by pitiless bronze, and make a prayer to the gods, to mighty Hades and to dread Persephone” (Od., 10, 532).

In the same context, we read, “[t]hen I called to my comrades and told them to skin and to burn the sheep that lay there *killed* (ἔσφαγμένα) with the pitiless bronze, and to make a prayer to the gods, to mighty Hades and dread Persephone” (Od., 11, 45).

In Homer’s time, the verb was mostly used to mean slay, slaughter by accurately cutting the throat of animals or tear by the throat. Human beings are slain in Homer’s epics, but not with the use of the verb in question. Homer has no metaphorical use of the lexeme. “Now when they had prayed and *cut the throats* (ἔσφαξαν) of the cattle and flayed them, they cut out the thigh pieces and covered them with a double layer of fat and laid the raw bits upon them. They had no wine to pour over the blazing sacrifice” (Od., 12, 359). The ritual sacrifice is accompanied by prayer.

In Homer, it is always a slaughter by properly cutting the throat of animals. “And the others *cut the boar’s throat* (ἔσφαξαν), and singled him, and quickly cut him up, and the swineherd took as first offerings bits of raw flesh from all the limbs, and laid them in the rich fat” (Od., 14, 426). Ritual was done and accompanied by a prayer to all the gods so that wise Odysseus could return to his own house. “But nonetheless we still endure to see these deeds, while sheep are *slaughtered* (σφαζομένων), and wine drunk, and bread consumed, for hard it is for one man to restrain many” (Od., 20, 312). “She, the fair lady, told of all that she had endured in the halls, looking upon the hateful throng of the suitors, who because of her *slew* (ἔσφαζον) many beasts, cattle and fat sheep; and great store of wine was drawn from the jars,” (Od., 23, 305).

2.3.2. Euripides (5th century B.C.)

Two centuries later, in Euripides, the lexeme σφάζω did not change in its meaning, but its application evolved. The verb could now be applied not only to cattle like in Homer but also to humans. In fact, unlike Homer in the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad*, Euripides often uses σφάζω for the killing of a human. This usage happens either in a ritual context or in a profane slaughter. Having the murder of humans in view, ruthless and violent death is always in view. By the time of Euripides, σφάζω could mean slaughtering by cutting the throat or any killing whether by knife or sword. The following are references in Euripides in which the cutting of the throat using the lexeme in question has got to do mostly with human beings rather than with animals.

The following are quotations from Euripides which highlight the fact that by this period σφάζω could apply to both cattle and human beings, with the meaning of killing or slaughtering by knife or sword. In most cases, it has the denotation of killing by properly cutting of the throat. “They [*these men*] shall be *slaughtered* (σφαγέντες) at once and fill my belly, giving the server a feast hot from the coals and the rest boiled and tender from the cauldron” (Eur. Cyc., 243).²² Here, the verb means generally to kill. In the next occurrences, it is used in its technical form to suggest the cutting of the throat, “He cut the throat (ἔσφαζ’) of the first over the cauldron with a sweep of the arm and drained of his blood...” (Eur. Cyc., 398). In the chorus of the leader, we read, “[i] take your drift. You are eager to catch him by himself in the woods and cut his throat (σφάξαι) or push him off a cliff” (Eur. Cyc., 448).

Even if people could be killed in that way, such death was perceived to be inhuman and undeserved, “Bring near, <bring near> the blood-spattered (σφαγέντας) bodies of our unfortunate sons, who died an undeserved death at undeserving hands! In their death, the contest was decided,” (Eur. Sup., 813). Creusa: “[y]es, if you are willing to cut my throat (σφάξαι) within this holy place,” (Eur. Ion., 1309). Words of Creusa to Ion show that the verb technically meant killing by cutting the throat, “Go on, cut my throat! For I dispute with both of you and her you claim to what is hidden

²² Unless otherwise indicated, all English translations for Euripides are by Kovacs, D. from the LOEB Classical Library, 1999.

within,” (Eur. Ion., 1404). But sailing was terrible, and he did not get the right winds and, when he turned to the burnt offering, Calchas told him, “Agamemnon, lord of Hellas’ high command, never will you unmoor your ships from this land until Artemis receives your daughter Iphigenia as her slaughtered (σφαγεῖσσαν) victim,” (Eur., Iph, Tau., 20).

Let us turn now to the Iphigenia, which is that last extant tragedy by the ancient Greek playwright Euripides. “The play revolves around Agamemnon, the leader of the Greek forces in the Trojan War, and his decision to sacrifice his daughter, Iphigenia, to allow his troops to set sail and preserve their honour by doing battle against Troy.”²³ There is a shift in terms of the application of the lexeme rather than the meaning unlike the use of the lexeme in Homer. Like Homer, the context may be sacred or profane, but unlike Homer, the word is applied to a human being.

The following quote shows that σφάζω could be used with the general sense of killing, “[a]h me (for I cannot forget the pain of that day), how many times did I reach my hand out to touch my father’s chin [and, as I clung to them, his knees,] uttering words such as these: “O father, I am given in marriage by you—a marriage of shame! Now, even as you are killing (ἔσφαζον) me, my mother and the Argive women are singing the wedding song for me, and the whole house resounded with piping!” (Eur. Iph. Tau., 360). In the words of Orestes, one can see how he describes such a killing as a terrible death, “[a]s you should: he had a dreadful death, slaughtered (σφαγεῖς) by his wife” (Eur. Iph. Tau., 552). It is such a terrible death that every human will never endure as we see in the words of Pylades, “these things make me afraid and ashamed, and it is surely right for me to breathe my last, be slaughtered (σφαγεῖναι), and cremated with you since I am your friend and stand in fear of censure” (Eur. Iph. Tau., 685). Just as John lets his audience hear the words of the Lamb who was slain, so did “Orestes” let his hearers hear that “here are the words of her who was slain (σφαγεῖσ’) at Aulis, Iphigenia, who is alive through to people there is dead:...” (Eur. Iph. Tau., 770). It is more evident as already noted that in the Euripides, the lexeme is applied often to human beings rather than to animals. Next, is “the plot of the play follows an alternative myth of Helen of Sparta and her reunion and escape from Egypt with her husband, King Menelaus, after the

²³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iphigenia_at_Aulis

fall of Troy.” Euripides puts words in the mouth of the Atreus’s son, the bull sacrifice, “[k]ill, cut (σφάζειν) down the barbarians, throw them from the ship into the brine” (Eur. Hel., 1594).

Earlier in the same context, performing a ritual with the *cutting* of the bull’s *throat* as Menelaus was praying to the gods, they do not use the lexeme about the cutting of the bull’s throat (Eur. Hel., 1582-584). In the words of Teiresias to Creon, we see a sacrificial slaughter of a human being for the sake of the people, “hear then the course of my prophecies [by performing which you will save the city]: you must slaughter (σφάξαι) your son Menoeceus here, for the country’s sake: you yourself asked for your fate” (Eur. Pho., 913). We can see again the ritual human sacrifice in the words of Teiresias to Creon, “[y]ou are right to ask me and to enter a contest of words. This boy must be slaughtered (σφαγέντα) in the chamber where an earthborn snake, the guardian of Dirce’s waters, came to birth” (Eur. Pho., 933). Rarely, the word could be used to mean lapidation, the throwing of stones on someone until they die, “poor Orestes barely persuaded them he should not be stoned (σφαγή) to death” (Eur. Ore., 957).

Homer does not see fit to use the word when relating to human beings. The vast majority of instances the word is used in Euripides; it has the dreadful killing of human beings. It is clear in all the preceding quotations even on the following, “Cut her throat (σφάξαντες). She is hiding in your house” (Eur. Ore., 1107); “But if he cannot conquer his pride and anger and tries to kill you, you must proceed to the cutting of the girl’s throat (σφάζε)” (Eur. Ore., 1199). “I shall go now, take my stand upon the high battlements, slit my own throat (σφάξας) above the deep black precinct of the serpent, the place the seer named and set the city free” (Eur. Pho., 1010). It appears as already been noted that the meaning is slaughtering by properly cutting someone’s throat. They apply this meaning to cattle in Homer, and to a human being in Euripides.

In Euripides, the lexeme could also mean an *act of devoting* or *sacrificing* someone to the gods with no reference to death or the cutting of a throat of the victim. It could also only mean to kill with no connotation of having a throat cut., “[n]ear the eddies which Euripus with its frequent breezes sets rolling, churning up the dark-blue sea, my father sacrificed (ἔσφαξεν) me—so it is believed—to Artemis for Helen’s sake in

the famous clefts of Aulis” (Eur. Iph. Tau., 8). I would argue that it intends the same meaning in the following words of Iphigenia, “Does anyone still speak of the daughter who was sacrificed (σφαγείσης)?” (Eur. Iph. Tau., 563).

There are also a few instances where the word is used commensurate with all the previous corpora regarding the slaughtering of animals be it in a ritual or not. “Aegisthus took from a basket a straight-bladed sacrificial knife, cut off a hair of the calf and put it on the pure fire with his right hand, and then when the servants had lifted the calf onto their shoulders, he *cut its throat* (κᾶσφαξ’)” (Eur. Ele., 813). “Standing there for the bull sacrifice (σφαγῆ) he said nothing about any dead man, but as he *cut his throat* he prayed, “O Poseidon... “ (Eur. Hel., 1582). “That is what they said, urging them to battle. The seer proceeded to sacrifice (ἔσφαζον) victims and observed the fissures at the tips of sacrificial flame, denoting an unfavourable moistness, and the peak of the fire which portends two things, either victory or defeat” (Eur. Pho., 1255).

In conclusion, we have noted the fact that in the classical period, σφάζω was used in a war context to mean a violent and atrocious killing or technically a ritual killing by properly cutting the throat of the victim. In Homer, the lexeme is exclusively applied to animals and often in the sacrificial killing. In Euripides, they primarily use σφάζω is within a war context to mean killing or killing by cutting a throat with a sword or a knife but mainly applied to human beings (cf. table #1 below)

2.3.3. A summary table of σφάζω in Homer and Euripides.

Σφάζω in Homer’s Odyssey	Σφάζω in Homer’s Iliad	Σφάζω in Euripides
Ritual killing <i>only applied</i> to animals by properly cutting their throat.	Ritual killing <i>only used</i> to animals by properly cutting their throat.	The profane and dreadful murder of humans by cutting their throats.
		Occasionally, the ritual killing of animals.

Table # 1

2.4. THE HELLENISTIC USES OF ΣΦΆΖΩ IN THE SEPTUAGINT AND ITS OT BACKGROUNDS.

Hill (1967:19,20) helpfully remarks that “it is clear that the discussion of the semantics of New Testament words and word-families requires us to deal with the meaning of their Old Testament Hebrew equivalents.” He contends that “[t]he language of the New Testament is a special kind of Jewish biblical Greek (both in the syntax and the thought-forms it expresses) and the LXX translation plays a significant role in locating the area of the Hebrew meaning of New Testament words.” Therefore, looking up σφάζω in the LXX reveals that this verb occurs seventy-one times (71x). In these cases, it represents five (5) Hebrew roots—גרה, חבט, טבט, טש and קש.

It is טש which is regularly rendered as σφάζω. טש occurred seventy-eight times (78x) in the Hebrew Bible. Out of seventy-eight (78) or seventy-nine (79) occurrences of the verb טש in the HB (cf. Averbeck, 1996:78), sixty-eight times (68x) it rendered by σφάζω in the LXX. The verb טבט, however, is translated three times (3x) as σφάζω. If on the one hand, the LXX *usually* renders טבט as σφάζω (Averbeck, 1996:336), on the other hand, “the LXX uses *primarily* σφάζω, slay, slaughter, to render Heb. טש” (Averbeck, 1996:79). In the OT, the verb טבט most often refers to the literal slaughtering or butchering of animals for food (Averbeck, 1996:335). Whereas טש which primarily is represented by σφάζω in the LXX “is used extensively and in relation to all the slain offerings” (Averbeck, 1996:78).

In the LXX the verb σφάζω occurs fifty times (50x) in its *application* to animal ritual slaughtering properly by cutting the throat. Three times (3x) they use it in profane animal slaughtering for food or solely for blood. Eighteen times (18x) σφάζω is associated with human slaughtering, although not within a religious (ritual) context. One should be careful of falling into the pitfall of the so-called prescriptive fallacy. The meaning of the verb σφάζω in the majority of cases does not account for every other occurrence. This is because “context determines words meaning, not word counts” (Bock, 2006:151).

Having said that טש is often rendered as σφάζω in the LXX, does that mean that everything understood by the Heb. word טש is also understood by the Greek word σφάζω? Louw (1982:43) points out that “when questions such as these are considered, it is soon discovered that dictionaries are the main concern with

translation equivalents rather than meanings.” He (1982:43) points out that “[i]n semantics, the concern should be with meaning rather than words, for words only partially overlap between languages.” It may be true that $\sigma\phi\acute{\alpha}\zeta\omega$ and $\sigma\psi$ mean nearly the same thing; but we cannot conclude that every other Greek word which translates $\sigma\psi$ must bear a similar significance to $\sigma\phi\acute{\alpha}\zeta\omega$, they closely relate a similar significance to $\sigma\phi\acute{\alpha}\zeta\omega$ in meaning to $\sigma\psi$ (cf. Hill 1967:26).

A careful interpretation of the OT will note that the usage of the Greek verb $\sigma\phi\acute{\alpha}\zeta\omega$ and its Hebrew counterparts can be split into four grounds of the application (cf. table #2 on page 44). In two of them, $\sigma\phi\acute{\alpha}\zeta\omega$ is applied to animal slaughtering in both ritual and non-ritual contexts. They apply the third ground to the violent killing of a human being, while the fourth $\sigma\phi\acute{\alpha}\zeta\omega$ can mean the beating of a shekel.

2.4.1. The ritual uses of $\sigma\phi\acute{\alpha}\zeta\omega$ applied to an animal.

First, most of its usage is a ritual animal slaughtering. This is purely cultic use of the verb. It is a killing by accurately cutting the throat of a sacrificial victim. This usage and its application are predominantly in the Pentateuch, specifically in Leviticus. The ritual animal sacrifice with the use of $\sigma\phi\acute{\alpha}\zeta\omega$ ($\sigma\psi$) is central to Leviticus. The verb occurs about fifty times in ritual sacrifice. Brown (1906:1006) is right to describe it as a real technical term which can be used “for killing a beast for sacrifice (Lev. 1:5-11) or a bird (Lev. 14:5), or a beast in illicit sacrifice (Isa. 66:3) or a Passover lamb (Ex. 12:6).”

Though theology cannot be deduced merely from statistics, it is, however, worth noting that the mainstream of those occurrences is in Leviticus, approximately thirty-one times (31x). The word appears about twelve times (12x) in the first section of the book (1-7 cf. 1:5, 11; 3:2, 8, 13 etc.), the section which deals with ritual sacrifices. Some of these sacrifices express different ways of being grateful to Yahweh and some still express different ways of being sorry for one’s sins. It occurs seven times (7x) in the section that deals with the ordination of priests (8-10 cf. 8:15, 19, 23, 9:8, 12, 15, 18). And it appears again seven times (7x) in the section which deals with ritual purity (11-14 cf. 14:5, 6, 13, 19, 25, and 50). In the central section devoted to the Day of Atonement (16-17 cf. 16:11, 15; 17:3, 4, 5), the word appears five times (5x).

Last, they use once the word (1x) in the section devoted to the qualifications for priests (21-22 cf. 22:28). They relate every mention of the word in Leviticus to the slaughtering of animals by accurately cutting their throats. This shows that σφάζω has *basically* and *technically* cultic and ritual undertones applied to animals. It also shows that in the LXX they use regularly the verb σφάζω in connection with the ritual sacrifices in which ideas of expiation, propitiation and atonement probably overlap. In the vast majority of instances, σφάζω holds a plain reference to the slaughtering of animals for ritual sacrifice. Where the LXX translators render υνψ and its derivatives by words of the σφάζω class, they make it by words which give the meaning to slaughter, to kill by sword or knife or rarely, to beat. One should expect to find that they regard the σφάζω class as conveying similar ideas.

In the vast majority of passages where σφάζω and related words (θύω, κατασφάζω, σφαγή) occur, the context contains a clear reference to ritual sacrificial system: many in fact express the desire that blood as an epitome of death should be shed, and so suggest that the meaning of σφάζω is closely related to slaughter by accurately cutting the throat of the victim as a sacrifice to God or the gods. There are, however, a few times when instead of an animal, they refer a human to as a ritual sacrifice.

In the OT, the sacrificial system of animal slaughtering was at the heart of Jewish worship and the surrounding nations. Nearly every facet of Israel's worship of Yahweh integrates ritual sacrifice. A fuller understanding of the sacrificial system informs one's understanding of what it means to approach Yahweh in worship. For this reason, Aaron and his sons were selected to teach Israel how Yahweh is to be appropriately approached in worship. Most of the time, this lexeme is heard, it brings the connotation of a slaughtered animal in ritual as an aspect of worship to mind.

2.4.2. The profane uses of σφάζω applied to an animal.

The second field of applicability of σφάζω in the OT is a secular animal slaughtering. It does not link the motivation to a ritual, but to serve as food or any other reason other than cultic (Gen. 37:31 (υνψ); Gen. 43:16 (υνψ) and Isa. 22:13 (υνψ)). Brown (1906:1006), shows that υνψ can "be used for the slaughter of a beast for either food (1 Sam. 14:32-34) or blood (Gen. 37:31)." This is not the technical use of this verb in Hebrew. It is, however, worth pointing out that in the Ancient Near East even in the

profane slaughtering of an animal, the element of the ritual was never absent. Most Ancient Near Eastern cultures considered the blood and the fats of the victim as sacred and therefore belonging to the gods. In most cases where ritual sacrifice is not intended, the Hebrew word which best describes that kind of killing is *חט* (cf. Ps.37:14).

2.4.3. The ritual and non-ritual uses of *σφάζω* applied to a human being.

The third area of applicability is profane but in connection with a cruel massive killing of humans. The human ritual sacrifice with the use of *σφάζω* (*חט*) was widely practised in the pagan religions of Israel's surrounding nations. Human sacrifice was never part of the usual ritual sacrificial system in Israel. It was forbidden in Yahwistic worship (Ez. 16:17-21, cf. 23:39; Isa. 57:5). Brown (1906:1006) highlights that "*חט* can be used for slaughtering persons (Judg. 12:6) or in human sacrifice to the Lord (Gen. 22:10) or more often to false gods (Ezra 16:21)." Walton reminds us that the Mesopotamian people practised the ritual feeding of the gods with human meat and by Phoenicians and Canaanites (2000:72). In Ezekiel, Jerusalem offers her children to her lovers, the gods of the nations (16:17-21).

There are, however, two exceptions to the "legitimate" use of the term in connection to human ritual sacrifices for Israel. First, Yahweh asks Abraham to offer Isaac in sacrifice (Gen. 22:10). This action was merely a test of trust. Isaac was not even slain in sacrifice; instead, a ram was given as a substitute.²⁴ Amidst the backdrop of this text, Walton (2000:52) maintains that "the story of human ritual sacrifice of Isaac suggests that Abraham was familiar with human sacrifice and was not surprised by Yahweh's demand. However, the story also provides a model for the substitute for an animal sacrifice that distinguishes Israelite practice from that of other cultures."

Second, Samuel (1 Sam. 15:33) killed (*חט*) Agag, the king of Amalek. This action seems to be a ritual killing as they describe him as the "dedicated" Agag (cf. Bromiley ed., 1985:1125). Tübingen is probably right to put it under ritual human

²⁴ "In the ancient Near East, the god that provides fertility is also entitled to demand a portion of what has been produced. This is expressed in the sacrifice of animals, grain and children. Texts from Phoenician and Punic colonies, like Carthage in North Africa, describe the ritual of child sacrifice as a means of insuring continued fertility. The Biblical prophets and the laws in Deuteronomy and Leviticus forbid this practice, but that also implied that it continued to occur" (Walton et al, 2000:53).

sacrifice as he points out that “this [Agag’s slaying] was at the shrine in Gilgal” (Bromiley ed., 1971:931). “The word used here is unique to the Old Testament and is sometimes translated ‘hacked to pieces’” (Walton et al., 2000:304).²⁵ These two stories are the only exceptions where σφάζω has no reference to the killing of a large group of people and has “legitimate” or “allowed” ritual killing of a human.

“However, apart from those two exceptions, in the OT σφάζω is *frequently used* where a deliberate killing of a *large group of people* is in view. It is a term used for a massacre, a violent and atrocious murder with a connotation of genocide. In the vast majority of cases, if not all, the victims were always wicked people deserving that kind of death. We find this usage in the books supposedly having a Deuteronomist’s hand (Judg, 1 Sam., 1 & 2 Kgs), the poetical books (Psalms and Proverbs) and in the Major Prophets (Isa., Jer. and Ez).

In Judges 12:6, σφάζω and its Heb. cognates have a clear genocidal and brutal connotation in which the Gileadites seized and *killed* (חבו) forty-two thousand (42,000) Ephraimites for protesting against Jephthah’s leadership.²⁶ This action is more like an attempt to exterminate the whole clan of the Ephraimites. In 1 Kgs 18:40, Elijah had four hundred and fifty (450) prophets of Baal and four hundred (400) prophets of Asherah seized and *slaughtered* (ἔσφαξαν, υψ) in the Kishon valley for promoting rival worship of Yahweh in Israel. It is worth pointing out that “the agenda of Jezebel was to enthrone Baal as the king and national god of Israel instead of Yahweh” (Walton et al., 2000: 377). The extermination of Baal’s prophets was one of the most enormous massacres ever.

Jehu was anointed as king and given a special mission to destroy the house of Ahab to avenge Yahweh’s servants, the prophets and the blood of all Yahweh’s servants shed by Ahab’s wife Jezebel (2 Kgs. 9:6-10). In 2 Kgs 10:7, Jehu executes Yahweh’s instructions and had seventy (70) princes of Ahab *slaughtered* (ἔσφαξαν, υψ). Though, as Walton (2000:398) highlights, “such annihilation of the ruling family was common practice both in Israel and the ancient Near East at large,” the author of

²⁵ “Dismemberment was common procedure for the execution of high-ranking enemies and is depicted on a relief of the Assyrian king, Shalmaneser III” (Walton et al, 2000:304).

²⁶ By this time “the tribes of Israel were set up as individual entities joined together by their common faith and heritage. The only formal leadership they recognized was the leadership of their national God, Yahweh, and the tribal leadership of elders and clan heads. Jephthah represented a departure from that because he was given a formal position of rule (cf. 11:8-10). This may have been viewed as threat to other tribes” (Walton et al, 2000:264).

Kings wants his readers to realise that this move was from Yahweh. In 2 Kgs 10:14, again Jehu was ordered to take forty-two (42) men, Ahaziah's relatives who seemed to be accomplices of Ahab, the wicked king of the northern kingdom. Walton adduces that "since Jehoram of Israel was the uncle of Ahaziah of Judah, these relatives of Ahaziah are at least indirectly accolated with the bloodline of the house of Ahab. That is sufficient to bring a death sentence on their heads" (2000:398). They took them and slaughtered (ἔσφαξαν, ὑψ) them.

Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, is portrayed as Yahweh's servant—an instrument of Yahweh's judgment against Juda (cf. Jer. 27:6). This meaning is clear in Ezekiel where Babylon is pictured as a blade sharpened for the slaughter (σφάγια), i.e., the mass murder of God's people (Ez. 21:10). In Jer. 19:7, the LORD will make people of Jerusalem and Judah fall by the sword before their enemies and at the hands of those who want to *kill* (σφάζω, ὑψ) them. In 2 Kgs 25:7 (cf. Jer. 39:6; 52:10), Nebuzaradan, the commander of the Babylonian's armed forces killed (ἔσφαξεν, ὑψ) the sons (they do not specify the number) of Zedekiah. The latter was the last evil king of Judah just before the Babylonian exile, according to the writer of Kings (cf. 2 Kgs 24:19-20).²⁷ Most passages where the lexeme has a sense of the enormous mass murder of human beings is supposedly Deuteronomist. It implies that by the exilic period, the lexeme was mainly used to denote colossal, brutal and atrocious killing of human beings. Most times, if not all the times, the victim somewhat *deserves* that kind of extermination.

The vast majority of the above references have a Deuteronomist(s)'s hand. This is true when Deuteronomy—2 Kings is taken as a single literary work and was composed almost at the same period (sixth or seventh century BCE). It appears that σφάζω is used to signify the murder of people in substantial quantities. The Deuteronomist(s) applies the word most often to those he/they perceived to be wicked people. The wicked are possibly those who disobeyed the so-called Deuteronomistic Code. On the one hand, ironically Homer, who wrote almost in the same period, uses σφάζω only for the killing of animals, while the Deuteronomist uses σφάζω predominantly for wicked people, enemies of Yahweh.

²⁷ Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible: English Standard version (2016). Scripture quotations marked NIV 1984 are from The Holy Bible: New International Version (1984).

They picture Babylon as both an instrument and object of Yahweh's wrath in Scripture. In Isa. 14:21, the LORD has ordered for a place to be prepared to *slaughter* (ἔσφαξεν) the sons (plural) of Babylon. In Jer. 41:7, Ishmael son of Nethaniah from the Davidic line and his supporters *slaughtered* (ἔσφαξεν, ἑβ) eight (8) men from Shechem, Shiloh and Samaria. On this, Ryken (2001:609) contends that "the *massacre* at Mizpah was a senseless act of violence against innocent victims, committed by a wicked, vicious man. Ishmael murdered God's governor, betrayed God's pilgrims, and piled the dead bodies in a hole in the ground" [italics mine].

Interestingly, in this same context, the killing of *one person*, Gedaliah son of Ahikam at Mizpah by Ishmael son of Nethaniah is not described with σφάξω (cf. Jer. 41:2). They struck (ἐπάταξαν) him down, killing (κατέστησεν) the one whom the king of Babylon had appointed governor over the land. Since the victim is *one* as opposed to a *large group of people* and since the victim is not ritually killed unlike the case of Isaac and king Agag, σφάξω is not used.

In the vast mainstream of the cases above, the term stands out as an expression of God's judgment against both his rebellious people and wicked nations. It is used to paint a vivid picture of God's wrath against anything nasty. In each of the examples given, the object of the killing is always a large group of people. Considering the date of writing from which the above texts occur, it suggests an everyday use of the term since the authors—Deuteronomist, Jeremiah and Ezekiel—are contemporaries.

The elements of atrocity, violence and colossal extermination of a human being by whatever instrument be it the sword, or a knife are inherent in using σφάξω. About human slaughtering, the OT associates this killing with God's judgment of the wicked. The victim of the carnage has been often evil people or those who have somewhat rebelled against Yahweh. Hence, when the LORD is angry with people, he has them slaughtered.

However, in Ps. 37:14, "the wicked draw the sword and bend the bow to bring down the poor and needy, to slay (σφάξαι, ἡὶβ) those whose ways are upright" (cf. Prov. 9:2). Looking at the imagery of drawing out of the sword and the bending of the bow used by the psalmist in this verse, it is clear as Plumer (1975:452) puts it, that "all this was done, not for show, or parade; but to cast down the poor and the needy.

The ruin of the good man is seriously intended.” Goldingay (2006:524) also points out that “... the parallel colon itself, then makes explicit that they [wicked] indeed not merely cause a wound from which people may recover, but kill them.” This usage is one of the few occurrences where σφάξω applies to the killing of “righteous” people by wicked people (cf. Jer. 41:7). The Heb. verb used for the slaying in Ps. 37:14 is טב. Commenting on this verse, Plumer (1975:452) argues that “slay, or kill, applied to the slaughtering of sheep, or oxen, or any beasts for food, not for sacrifice; or to the destruction of human beings in war and by violence.” This sense is plausible because the most common Heb. verb used for ritual sacrifice is טה which the LXX renders almost always by σφάζω than טב which applies well in a profane slaughtering. It is likely that John in Revelation picked this application of the term and uses it to Christ and the church. Each time they condemn the act when the wicked does it to the innocent (cf. Isa. 57:5; Ez. 16:21; 23:39).

In Gen. 22:10, they use the verb in a human ritual sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham. Abraham was just about to slaughter (טה) his son Isaac. However, whenever the word applies to human ritual sacrifices to gods, the actions always received a negative tone in Scripture. Isa. 57:5, the LORD accuses the wicked of doing this horrible act to their children. Ez. 16:21, God accuses the unfaithful Jerusalem of slaughtering her children and sacrificing them to idols. Ez. 23:39, the LORD charged the northern and the southern kingdoms for slaughtering their children and sacrificing them to gods.

To close this section, one can observe that σφάζω is technically and primarily a word applied in the sacrificial system of the Yahwistic worship. They employ the sacrificial knife to properly cut the throat of the victim—an animal. Ideas of atonement, expiation, appeasement, forgiveness and praise of Yahweh are present in using this term in the OT. In its application to human beings, as stated earlier, σφάζω is applied within the context of a massive slaughter—a genocide or a holocaust. They use mostly the word to the wicked as a judgment from Yahweh (except in Psalms). *This usage is the reverse of how it is used in John.* John always has the faithful ones, the people of God, those on God’s side in thought as victims in using σφάζω. However, each time they condemn the act is when the wicked have caused harm to the innocent (cf. Isa. 57:5; Ez. 16:21; 23:39).

2.4.4. The non-technical uses of σφάζω applied to the shekel.

Finally, says Brown (1906:1006) “in pt. Pass. **טנש** can mean hammered or beaten of shekels (2 Chron. 9:15), or hammered meaning sharpened arrow.” It is worth showing that we cannot with certainty claim that the development of meaning which we have traced in **טנש** and **חבט** in the Old Testament corpus and the classic Greek texts applies to the Greek word σφάζω by which they are usually translated.²⁸ None of the NT occurrences of σφάζω has this application in view.

²⁸ cf. Hill, 1967:58

2.4.5. A summary table of the meanings of σφάζω in LXX.

Ritual and technical use of σφάζω applied to an animal.	Profane use of σφάζω applied to an animal.	Ritual use of σφάζω applied to a human.	Profane use of σφάζω applied to a human.	Nontechnical use of σφάζω referred to the shekel.
The killing of the animal by properly cutting their throat.	The killing of the animal by properly cutting their throat.	The killing of a human by using a sacrificial knife or sword.	The drastic, ruthless and cruel murder of a massive group of people (genocidal connotation).	Hammering and beating of shekels.
For ritual and sacrifices offered to God(s).	For food or any other non-cultic reason.	Used mainly in the pagan religions of the time.	Applied to God's enemies and evil people.	The Hebrew root mostly used is שטח
The Hebrew root mostly used is שטח	The Hebrew root mainly used is טבח	Strictly forbidden in Yahwistic worship. Used twice in a "legitimate" way (Cf. Gen.22:10 & 1 Sam 15:33)	The Hebrew root mainly used is שטח	
		The Hebrew root mostly used is שטח		

Table # 2

2.5. THE HELLENISTIC NONBIBLICAL (OR KOINE) USES OF ΣΦΆΖΩ.

We now come to the third stage of our diachronic analysis of σφάζω, which is also the first stage of the synchronic analysis. A quick look at σφάζω in Moulton and Milligan discloses several essential items. First, the entry notes that “slay,” and “slaughter” are the cognates. Second, the entry gives the alternate spelling of the term in Pontic and particular other dialects. Third, the entry points out the hyperbolic use of the lexeme by A.D.23. At this stage of our enquiry, we turn to the writings of Philo, Josephus and some Rabbinic writings. These are here chosen because they were written sometime in the First Century but before John’s Revelation. Hence, they apply to our inquiry of the meaning and significance of σφάζω in the Apocalypse of John.

Entries in the lexicon note that Philo rarely uses σφάζω but has it for ritual and secular slaying, including murder. However, Josephus uses σφάζω (also σφάπτω) for ritual slaying and even common to human killing in such senses as hewing down, massacring, and butchering, e.g., a defenceless population especially shocking in the slaughter of human beings. “When describing the sacrificial system of the OT, he [Josephus] often uses σφάζω in a sense found in non-bibl. Gk. and the LXX: to slay a sacrifice by cutting its throat” (Ant., 3:226, 237, 242, cf. also 3.206). “With notable frequency, Josephus uses σφάζω and ἀποσφάπτω for the grisly and mostly illegal slaying of men” (Tübingen, 1971:933).

Coming to the first century’s rabbis, the entry shows that sometimes the term ‘to slay’ was used with no ritual reference, e.g., the butchering of rustled cattle. They also lay down strict rules for correct slaughtering, whether cultic or non-cultic. The throat should be slit with a single stroke. They use the טב which is translated a few times as σφάζω in the Rabbinic writings for the profane slaying of cattle. This is the case even in most times when טב is used in the Old Testament. Tübingen (1971:933) adduces that טב “is found in expositions of the penalties for rustling in Exodus 21:37 and the continuation in 7, 2b it adduces instances in which amends must be made” (1971:933). Tübingen claims that טב means profane slaying. Whereas, טש is used in rabbinical writings for ritual slaughtering.” This means, according to Tübingen, טש is the rabbinical word for correct slaughtering whether this be the slaughtering of sacrifices or profane slaughtering (Tübingen, 1971:933).

Therefore, one can note that the lexeme σφάζω during this period could be used in different ways. Like in Leviticus, it could be utilised technically with religious and ritual undertones (cf. Josephus). They could also use it in a general sense, but with genocidal connotations, especially in a guerrilla war (cf. Josephus). Again, at least, by this period, the lexeme could be used metaphorically without having the killing in mind. It meant to persecute and make one suffer and wound them most painfully.

2.6. THE BIBLICAL USES OF ΣΦΑΖΩ IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

In as far as the NT study of words is concerned, this step seems to be the fourth and last phase of the diachronic analysis, but the second and also the concluding stage of the synchronic analysis. We split this stage into two sections. We focus the first section on the occurrence of σφάζω and its cognates (θύω, κατασφάζω, σφαγή) in the NT books excluding Revelation. Whereas, the second part will deal with the analysis of the word in Revelation. The latter is at the heart of the next chapter of this thesis.

The *noun* σφαγή occurs thrice (3x) in the NT (Acts 8:32, Rom. 8:36 and Jas. 5:5). In three occurrences, the first two are direct quotations from the OT, and the last also seems to have an OT background. In these passages, σφαγή has the meaning of *slaughter* or even a *sacrifice*. This first occurrence is “[l]ike a sheep he was led to the slaughter and like a lamb, before its shearer is silent, so he opens not his mouth”²⁹ (Acts 8:32). This is a direct quotation from Isa 53:7. It describes Isaiah’s servant figure being led like a sheep to the *butchery*, a place of carnage. For Philip, as Luke records in Acts, the servant character of the Isaianic text is Jesus. He was not a type of Christ, but Christ himself. Isa. 53 is one of the so-called four *Servant Songs*. In this song, the servant figure appears to be priestly rather than kingly (cf. Kayumba, 2017: 41). It is for our iniquities and transgressions that the servant is led to the slaughter. In the book of Isaiah, they take the servant to a *place of* ritual sacrifice. His cruel and violent death at that *place* will secure the forgiveness of sin for many, resulting in peace with God. Therefore, in this passage, σφαγή has much more to do with *the location of* a sacrifice than the sacrifice itself or the action of slaughtering.

²⁹ The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2016). (Ac 8:32). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

We find the second occurrence of σφαγή in a quote from the Psalms, “[f]or your sake, we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered”³⁰ (Rom. 8:36 cf. Ps. 44:22). Unlike the first quotation, here the noun has more to do with the act of *slaughtering sheep* rather than the place of slaughter, the butchery. If the first occurrence is applied to Christ, the second has Christ’s followers in view. God’s people are considered as slaughtered sheep. This means sheep which are fattened and made ready to be slaughtered. The connotation is not ritual but the readiness of God’s people to be killed anytime by the enemy. The psalmist highlights that they suffer and die for God’s sake. It has to do with the suffering of God’s people. Although they are considered as sheep ready for slaughter, the love of God is unailing to them, and based on that very love, they will be redeemed (Ps. 44:26).

Ps. 44 is a collective lament of God’s people in the face of suffering. This suffering could be a grave danger such as “a military attack, political persecution, or some unjust action against them” (DeClaisée-Walford et al., 2014:408). Paul applies the text to himself and his fellow believers who suffer for *the sake* of Christ (Rom. 8:36). It appears that the consideration of God’s people as sheep awaiting slaughter is a typical experience for believers. It is, therefore, more likely as Jewett maintains that “Paul incorporated the quotation to adduce scriptural support to show that suffering is not a disqualifying mark for those claiming to be true disciples. He had this to silence criticism of his apostleship along these lines” (Kruse, 2012:363). They are to be prepared for death at any moment, for the sake of Christ. Even then, God’s love is unailing. Moo (1996:543, 4) argues that “this verse is something of an interruption in the flow of thought, and one that is typical for Paul. For, Paul is constantly concerned to show that the sufferings experienced by Christians should occasion no surprise (see a similar interruption in Phil. 1:29). Here Paul cites Ps. 44:22 (LXX 43:22) to show, as Calvin puts it, that “it is no new thing for the Lord to permit his saints to be undeservedly exposed to the cruelty of the ungodly.”³¹

³⁰ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Rom. 8:36). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

³¹ “In Rom 8:36 Paul uses the metaphor of “the sheep to for the slaughter” πρόβατα σφαγῆς, quoting Ps 43:23 LXX; cf. further Jer. 12:23; Zech 11:4, 7) to refer to believers who live through trials and tribulations for Christ’s sake (Rom 8:35-37). As in OT, this metaphor emphasizes “sheep to be slaughtered,” in contrast “sheep for wool,” are fed and allowed to gaze only for the sake of being slaughtered; they endure this

The third occurrence is referring to rich people, and their self-indulgence, “You have lived on the earth in luxury and in self-indulgence. You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter”³² (Jas. 5:5). First, they use σφαγή in connection with Christ referring specifically to a *place* of violent death (Acts 8:32). Then it is used about *the victims*, believers referring to them as slaughtered sheep (Rom. 8:36). Finally, σφαγή is used to refer to wicked rich people pointing to *the day of slaughtering*. This could mean the occasion of slaughter. In Israel, the festivals were days where too much ritual slaughtering of animals was taking place. Hence, the *day of slaughtering* could include any of the Israelites’ festivals.

It is therefore likely that James is referring to how the affluent enjoyed themselves in those holidays as they slaughtered cattle. Moo (2000:217) has a different view as he argues that “day of slaughter could refer to any time when the poor suffer horribly while the rich are indulging themselves; as Dibelius paraphrases the idea, ‘You can live riotously while it goes badly for the pious.’” He concludes that “it is, therefore, far more likely that the day of slaughter is a vivid description of the Day of Judgment” (Moo, 2000:218 cf. McKnight 2011:395). In the same way, McCartney maintains that “the rich landowners are “fattening themselves,” and fattening is done to the livestock being readied for the abattoir. Therefore, “in a day of slaughter” is probably parallel to “in the last days of 5:3, and thus James (ironically perhaps) warns of the imminent eschatological day when oppressors themselves will be slaughtered” (McCartney, 2009:235). Is this day of slaughter referring to the destruction of the temple at AD 70? “The picture here is of the rich being fattened like cattle for the day of their own slaughter (cf., e.g., Jer. 12:3; Amos 4:1-3)” (Keener 1993:701).

The verb σφάζω and related words are not often found in the New Testament. Luke uses κατασφάζω in the parable of the Ten Minas, “ἧδεκαὶ κατασφάξατε αὐτοῦ ζῆμπροσθέν” (Lk. 19:27). They use it in the context of the final judgment, “But those enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them—bring them here and kill

difficult death (Jer. 12:3) without complaint or resistance (Isa. 53:7). Indeed, even without suspecting (Jer. 11:19)” (EDNT). “The quotation from Ps. 44, where the psalmist laments the fact that God has apparently rejected and humbled his people, could be understood if they had not been faithful. However, because the psalmist believes they had been faithful he thinks their suffering has been for God’s sake and so calls upon God to rise up and redeem them” (Kruse, 2012:363).

³²The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2016). (Jas 5:5). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

(κατασφάζατε) them in front of me.” In Luke, κατασφάζω is used to describe the deserved punishment against the Lord’s enemies. However, in the NT corpus, σφάζω is only a Johannine word. One entry in the lexicon puts it that “σφάζω, as used in the New Testament, occurs only in Johannine works as a strong term for fratricide—Cain’s murder of Abel in 1. Jn. 3:12” (1985:1125). Hence, John uses σφάζω twice (2x) in his first epistle and eight times (8x) in Revelation. The latter, as already pointed out, will be dealt with in the next chapter of this thesis.

Abel’s death recorded at 1 Jn. 3:12 is οὐ καθὼς Κάϊν ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ ἦν καὶ ἔσφαξεν τὸν ἄδε λφὸν αὐτοῦ καὶ χάριν τίνος ἔσφαξεν αὐτόν; ὅτι τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ πονηρὰ ἦν τὰ δὲ τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ αὐτοῦ δίκαια... Ritual or cultic killing does not find expression in the passage. The cultic usage of the word does not appear in John’s writing in as far as they apply it to believers (i.e., the church). In 1 John, they use the word in a profane way to denote a violent killing by a wicked person of a righteous person. It could mean killing using a sacrificial knife or a sword. Violence and mercilessness find full expression and connotation in the passage. By using σφάζω, John does not imply the proper cutting of Abel’s throat by his older brother with either a sword or a knife. It is merely an act of violence and mercilessness done to his brother.

The Heb. word רָחַק used in Gen. 4:8 to express the action of killing, could also mean to slay, to murder or to ruin. The LXX renders רָחַק with ἀποκτείνω, which is a *general* Greek verb for killing. John is not focusing on the nature of execution but on the perpetrator and the victim of that killing. It is an action performed by an evil one to a righteous person. For John, Cain belonged not only to the evil, but even his works were evil. Abel, on the other hand, is the opposite of Cain, as his actions were viewed as righteous. The verb σφάζω is used here to denote the atrocious killing of an honest man by a wicked person. Whether Abel’s throat was cut with either a knife or a sword is not what matters here.

2.6.1. A table of cognitive and related terms to the lexeme σφάζω.

Σφαγή (noun)

The slaughtering *place* (the butchery), site of violent death. They apply it to the site where Jesus was taken for his death cf. Acts 8:32.

Κατασφάζω(verb)

A violent act of killing a human being.

The slaughtering *sheep* (the sheep to be slaughtered (the victim). They apply it to believers who are like the victim to be murdered cf. Romans 8:36.

Applied to the killing of the Lord's enemies on the judgment day (Luke 19:27).

The slaughtering *day* (the time occasion) cf. James 5:5.

Table # 3

2.7. CONCLUSION.

We have now concluded three-quarters of our rational inquiry of σφάζω in Greek. We have journeyed up to the first half of the synchronic phase. However, the investigation of this lexeme in Revelation is the most significant one of this study and will be dealt with in the next chapter. Based on our examination of the different phases of the diachronic and synchronic analyses of σφάζω, we may claim that the general and technical meaning of the term denotes the killing of an animal by accurately cutting the throat often in a ritual context (cf. table #2 on page 44). This implies that the very thought one would come up with upon hearing this word is a cultic killing with the undertones of the atonement and expiation of sins and appeasement of the gods. The word is not fundamentally used for beheading, although sometimes it may be used in the killing of a human by having their head cut off.

People remembered and associated mostly ritual sacrifices with the use of σφάζω. We have likewise concluded that σφάζω is a way of depicting the cruel and violent death of a human. In the OT, this killing is predominately a deserved judgment against those who rebel against Yahweh. We have realised that by the first century AD, σφάζω could be used metaphorically, connoting the ideas of persecution

and torment of a human. Though the sacrificial knife or the sword is most frequently the instrument which comes to mind whenever σφάζω is used, they could use the word just to signify a brutal way of killing.

We have also observed that the bulk of the time when σφάζω applies to a human in non-religious terms, i.e., it holds a connotation of mass murder. The classic Greek uses of the word evolved from the killing and slaughtering of the sacrificial animal slaughtering (cf. Homer) to including a savage and merciless killing of a human being mostly within a war context (cf. Euripides). These connotations are apparent even in the Rabbinic writings, as well as other Greek classic nonbiblical corpora such as Philo and Josephus. At times the word means killing in a general sense by using a sword or a sacrificial knife. Many times, they apply the word in more technical knowledge to mean killing by accurately cutting the throat of the victims. In Homer, they use the word only for the murder of animals in either a secular or profane context.

Coming to the uses of the lexeme in the LXX and its OT backgrounds, this study concludes that the *general use* of the word is within a ritual context of Yahwistic worship. Animals are slaughtered by accurately cutting their throats and being sacrificed to Yahweh to either say one is sorry to God or to say thank you to Him. Whenever the word is used, they envisage the death of the victim. The OT makes use of the word by applying it to animals in ritual and profane circumstances, but to humans mostly in the sense of the secular killing. In most of these cases, they use the word as a judgment against the wicked and enemies of God. So, whether applied to an animal or a human in whatever context, be it ritual or profane, σφάζω often have very traumatic feelings. Even when the lexeme σφάζω is used figuratively, it evokes still very upsetting thoughts.

CHAPTER 3: A SURVEY OF THE OCCURRENCE OF ΣΦΆΖΩ IN REVELATION

3.1. INTRODUCTION.

This section is the second half of the final part of the preceding chapter—*The biblical uses of σφάζω in the New Testament*. We will fill the fourth, which also is the last phase of the historical study of σφάζω out in this section. The previous chapter is a journey through the different stages of time and space to make comparisons and contrasts of how the lexeme σφάζω has ever been used throughout history. In the inquiry done so far, this final stage is perhaps the most significant. It is so since the primary interest of this study has got much to do with John's uses of the lexeme σφάζω and its meanings, particularly in Revelation.

We must base these meanings on John's communication situation and the literary context—the surroundings of the targeted texts. Having said so, one should not think the efforts this researcher has spent so far in the exploration of the diachronic uses of the lexeme σφάζω in the previous chapter are futile. For, unless one recognises and sees the historical usages of the lexeme in different points of its usage, they cannot appreciate both its differences and similarities in Revelation. Therefore, an appreciation of the significance of a word can also be enhanced with comparisons and contrasts of its uses throughout history and at a time.

Having said so, at the core of this chapter is then an examination of each occurrence of σφάζω in Revelation. The purpose of this chapter is not primarily to consider the exegesis and hermeneutics of the targeted texts, although these will be covered to some extent. However, the vast majority of the exegesis and hermeneutics of the passages in which the lexeme σφάζω occurs will be the primary focus of the next three chapters. So, at this stage, the researcher is interested in making a *broad survey* of the occurrences of the lexeme in Revelation.

In Revelation, the lexeme σφάζω is used in three different but interrelated and interdependent dimensions—Christological, ecclesiological and therionological.³³ These levels, as already pointed out, will be thoroughly and deeply undertaken in the following chapters. This chapter will also investigate the way σφάζω fits in the social-

³³ The researcher has come up with the word “therionology” as a compound word (therion = beast and logos = study of) to mean the doctrine or study of beast

historical setting of Revelation and elaborating on the role it plays in the redeeming work of Christ.

3.2. RECAP OF THE DIACHRONIC STUDY OF ΣΦΆΖΩ.

So far in the diachronic study of the σφάζω, the researcher has discovered that the lexeme takes root in the semantic domains of violence, harm, destroy and kill. It is mainly within the sub-domain of kill where it sits well. The connotation of σφάζω is often that of deliberate, ruthless and dreadful killing of either animals or humans. Whether used in a profane or sacred way, σφάζω is predominantly performed with a sword (μάχαιρα, sacrificial knife) by adequately cutting the throat of the victim. It is traumatic and very hurtful. It was also observed that σφάζω falls into the category of physical injury rather than psychological harm. This harm can be caused by persons or circumstances (cf. Louw & Nida, 1988 : 228). The ritual use of the lexeme σφάζω regarding the killing of a human being is not frequent in the Old Testament, especially in Yahwistic worship.

The vast majority of ritual or sacred usage of the lexeme σφάζω is in association with animal sacrifices (cf. Leviticus). When applied to humans, the lexeme σφάζω, they use the lexeme σφάζω in the LXX to express the justice and wrath of God by having His enemies killed mercilessly. In this context, the victim of this just retribution is invariably *many masses*. This word σφάζω connotes such a severe and wild mean of ending the life of a human being. Ironically, this could probably be one reason Homer uses it solely for animal ritual and occasionally for profane sacrifices. A human whether “good” or “evil” does not deserve to be murdered in a manner that associates their death with σφάζω. This idea is right, at least in Homer. Those deserving of suffering and killing about whatever σφάζω cognates in the LXX are in most cases the wicked people, enemies of Yahweh or animal sacrifices.

It is interesting as we have already observed that the lexeme σφάζω is, however, used once in the Psalms having a righteous man as a victim of the wicked man in view (Ps. 37:14). This use of the term is an exception, though. However, it is this exception usage of the lexeme that matches John’s use of the lexeme. John would reasonably pick it up to trace the fate of Christ and that of Christians (the Lamb and his followers) both in 1 John and in Revelation. When painting the death

of Christ concerning his sacrifice, John picks up the ritual aspect of the lexeme as they mostly use it in Leviticus.

Christ, consequently suffered and died the death of wicked people.³⁴ The researcher is saying this because, in the LXX, the evil are the ones who experience this kind of death. Christ's great suffering and traumatic death have been transformed as a potent tool of healing and victory for God's people. It is, thus, an *identity marker* of the Lamb. The suffering and death of Christ about the purpose of this lexeme are paradigmatic of the agony, pain, suffering and killing of the saints; the followers of the Lamb in Revelation. This transformation of trauma in healing, prophecy, victory, and comfort implies that Christians of the first century and all ages should embrace and accept their suffering and death as an integral component of their identity, at least on this side of glory.

The New Testament corpus uses the noun σφαγή to refer first to the place (butchery) of the violent death of Christ (Acts 8:32). Second, it denotes the Christians as a *victim of* violent death (Rom. 8:36). Finally, it shows the day for an occasion of slaughtering (Jas. 5:5). The other cognate, κατασφάζω, is used in connection with the killing of Christ's enemies on the last day (Lk. 19:27). We should also show that by AD1, σφάζω could metaphorically mean: I torment / I persecute.

In this sense, it has a connotation of severe suffering and terrible persecution without necessarily leading to the termination of one's life. For John, it is those belonging to the evil one who torment, persecute and kill the saints.³⁵ In Revelation, it is the beast and the earth dwellers who are the persecutors and murderers of the church, the followers of the Lamb.

In conclusion, the lexeme σφάζω means a dreadful killing by adequately cutting the throat. Its use, therefore, is sacred in which ideas of expiation, propitiation, and atonement probably overlap. Σφάζω is John's favourite word to describe the atrocious suffering and death of Jesus and God's people. As already pointed out, it is

³⁴ Girard, according to Finamore (2009:132) as we will elaborate later does not think of the death of Christ in atoning category.

³⁵ The researcher is aware of those who rule out the persecution theory leading to the death of some Christian as the primary background of the Apocalypse. Johns (2003:127), for instance argues that "the crisis inscribed in the Apocalypse is primarily a *spiritual* crisis envisioned by John, but the resolution of the spiritual crisis would ironically induce a very real and dangerous *social* as the churches begun faithfully to resist the imperial cult and to face the consequences of their allegiance to Christ" [her emphasis].

the Lamb or his followers who are associated with this lexeme in Johannine writings. In as far as the applicability of the lexeme is concerned, Revelation picks up the way the LXX uses it in Leviticus and the Psalms. The usage is both ritual and profane. The former has the death of Jesus Christ, the perfect and final sacrifice in view (cf. Lev. 1:5, 11; 3:2, etc.). Whereas, the latter has the death of the believers in view (Ps. 37:14 cf. Pr. 9:2; 1 Jn. 3:12). In both, the word has the common element of a dreadful, merciless and traumatic killing.

3.3. ΣΦΆΖΩ WITHIN THE STRUCTURE OF REVELATION.

In Revelation, σφάζω, like the concept of blood, is applied first to the Lamb and then to his followers, the Church. Except in 13:3, on every occasion, they use σφάζω in Revelation; it has either Jesus or the community of faith in view. John uses σφάζω as an *identity marker* for both the Lamb and those who follow him wherever he goes. When the lexeme applies to the beast (13:3), the writer intends to depict the antagonist of God's people as the parody of the Lamb.

The structure of Revelation is highly debatable.³⁶ Nevertheless, this study agrees with and uses Hendriksen's (2007) structural division of Revelation. Hendriksen's fundamental division is a cyclical approach to Revelation and seems to be a natural division of the book. Further, a careful reading of Revelation will note the recurring themes which repeatedly occur in the script. They are running onward and backwards with different emphasis, new insights and some advances. Hendriksen's way of structuring the book is to use parallelism. Hendriksen (2007:16-23) reasonably contends for seven cycles or sections which run parallel to each other, with some developments which gradually evolve up to the end of the age.³⁷ The structural division is as follows, (1) 1–3: the seven lamp-stands; (2) 4–7: the seven seals; (3) 8–11: the seven trumpets; (4) 12–14: the Christ versus the

³⁶ The structure is determined mostly by how the Apocalypse of John should be approached whether through the historicist (Revelation is being fulfilled as history written beforehand), or preterist (The prophetic message of Revelation has nothing to do with the future and is thus a message directed to the first century believers), or even through the futurist lenses (the majority of the book [4–22]) concerns the future after the so-called rapture of the church except 1–3 which has to do with our time or finally through spiritual/symbolic lens. This study as already indicated will largely follow a parallelist approach. The parallelist approach assumes that there is no single fulfilment; only transcendent principles and recurrent themes in Revelation (Gregg, 1997: 43).

³⁷ For more detailed explanations on this please have a look on Hendriksen (2007:16-23).

dragon and his allies; (5) 15–16: the seven bowls; (6) 17–19: the fall of the dragon’s partners and (7) 20–22: the victory through Christ.

Having this structure in mind, what then does one find about σφάζω? It occurs only in three sections of Revelation; the second section which deals with the woes which befall the world in general (4–7: *the seven seals*), the fourth which gives us the background and rationale behind the suffering of the Church (12–14: *the Christ versus the dragon and his allies*) and the sixth (17–19: *the fall of the dragon’s allies*). This implies that whether or not on purpose, the writer “skips” one section at a time in which the word σφάζω does not come out at all. The skipped sections are 1–3: *the seven lamp-stands*; 8–11: *the seven trumpets*; 15–16: *the seven bowls* and 20–22: *the victory through Christ*.

3.4. THE CHRISTOLOGICAL DIMENSION OF ΣΦΑΖΩ IN REVELATION.

The imagery of the “*slain Lamb*” is the fundamental piece of the Revelation’s Christology. Hence, there is no proper Christology without the slain Lamb in the Apocalypse of John. Further, the link between the Lamb and those who “follow the Lamb wherever he goes” (14:4) is of massive importance to John’s theological agenda. This component will be explored and substantiated in depth later in this chapter. This section, however, deals with the rapport between the lexeme σφάζω and the Christology of Revelation—the applicability of the lexeme on Christ. In its Christological dimension, they apply the lexeme σφάζω four times (4x) having the imagery of the Lamb in view. That is three times (3x) in the second section, i.e. 4–7 cf. 5:6; 9,12 and once (1x) in the fourth section, i.e. 12–14 cf. 13:8. All four occurrences have cultic and ritual connotations as we will elaborate.

3.4.1. The worthiness of the Slaughtered Lamb.

The first occurrence of the Lamb metaphor in Revelation is in connection with the concepts of Christ’s worthiness and ability to break and open the scroll (Rev. 5). These concepts of (1) **worthiness as** pointed out in “... who is *worthy to* break the seals and open the scroll?” (5:2); “and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it.”³⁸ (5:4); “[w]orthy are you to take the

³⁸ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Rev. 5:4). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

scroll and to open its seals”³⁹ (5:9), or (2) **competence as** expressed in “And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or to look into it” (5:3)⁴⁰ and of (3) **ability** as stated in “...he can open the scroll and its seven seals” (5:5).⁴¹ All these ideas are identical in this text. Further, the fourfold action of *taking* the scroll (vv. 7, 8, 9), *breaking* the seals of the scroll (v. 2), *opening the* scroll (vv. 2, 3, 4, 5, 9) and *looking* inside the scroll (v.4) overlaps in their meaning and can also reasonably be used interchangeably. Hence, the phrase “... to break the seals and open the scroll” is emphatic because the breaking of seals is synonymous with the opening of the scroll. This is clear in 6:2, 3, 5, 7, and 9, 12; 8:1 where the object of the verb to *open* is the *seal rather* than the scroll. Seals can, therefore, be broken or opened.

We can also understand these actions as gradually happening in sequence—the slain Lamb takes (holds), then breaks. After that, he opens and finally; he looks inside the scroll. They are like four of the sides of a square pyramid prism. One action assumes that the rest will take place. They bind these actions and belong to each other. Hence, one cannot happen without the others. Taken as a whole, they all mean *to disclose or expose the substance of the scroll and to carry them out*.

The writing of a will or any other legal document in the Greco-Roman world is likely the background of John’s use of the scroll. Bruce (1979:1688) points out that it required a will or other official documents under the Roman law to be sealed by seven witnesses. He observes that “[t]he seals could be *properly broken* only by *someone with due authority* to do so” [my italics]. Keeping on the rationale behind the seven seals Aune (1997:346) points out that “[t]he significance of *seven seals* is apparently the impossibility of any unauthorized person gaining access to what has been sealed in such a manner, particularly when sealed by God or in the name of God” [his italics].⁴²

³⁹ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Rev. 5:9). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

⁴⁰ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Rev. 5:3). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

⁴¹ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Rev. 5:5). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

⁴² Koester (2001:76) explains that “the seven seals on the scroll – like the seals that were placed on the royal decrees, wills, and other official documents – imply that its contents are valid.”

3.4.2. Christ's worthiness to unveil the concealed.

Jesus' worthiness presupposes the reliability of the scroll. The content can be neither doubted nor rejected since it is disclosed by a faithful man. On this, it is likely that the concern of the person in the crowd as recorded in Lk. 12:13 "[t]eacher, tell my brother *to divide the inheritance with me*"⁴³ [my italics] could be based on this same socio-historical background. The sharing of an inheritance among family members involved the breaking of the seals, the opening of the will and *disclosing its content* in a courtroom.⁴⁴ Hence, this was a legal activity. Henceforth, Jesus' reply in Lk. 12:14, "[m]an, who appointed me a judge or arbiter between you?" By implication, for a person to attempt such a legal responsibility was to be appointed after proving themselves to be not only authoritative but also *faithful and trustworthy*. All family members to whom the inheritance is to be shared must trust him. For this man in the crowd (Lk. 12:13), Christ was that kind of the person—reliable and trustworthy.

We can link this to what Aune (1997:347) says, "the term ἄξιος, "worthy," does not merely mean "able" (i.e., the opposite of οὐδεὶς ἔδυνάτο, "no one was able" in v. 3), but it means preferably "qualified" in the sense of having the proper qualifications to perform this task." Therefore, in a culture where few people could read, the person to break a will was by inference the one dividing the inheritance of a family since he was the one revealing and disclosing what belongs to who. This person was to be someone all family members would trust and believe.

Thus, the breaking of the seals in Rev. 5 was foremost to do with the faithfulness in revealing the integrity of the seal's content. They could believe only a faithful and trustworthy person as they disclosed what was contained and concealed in that legal document. Koester (2001:77) also writes, "[o]nly a person who had been properly authorised was to break the seals and open the scroll." This could be the case even as already pointed out because few people could in the Roman world read. This leads to the factor of trust of first importance. No one should, therefore, challenge or

⁴³ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Lk. 12:13). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

⁴⁴ Koester (2001:76, 7) points out that "a seal in John's time consisted of a piece of wax that was placed on the edge of the scroll and imprinted with ring of the person who sent the text. *The seal insured that the scroll truly declared the will of its author and no one had altered the text*" [italics mine]. For this reason, the person to break the seals and to open the scroll ought to be worthy of trust.

disagree with their revelation of the content. Hence, the person was not merely to be authoritative, but more than that was perceived to be sincere, transparent, faithful, dependable and trustworthy, especially about their revelation of the substance of the legal document which no one else was to break its seals, open or even look into.

Moreover, it is assumed that the content of the legal document has been something already decided upon and could neither be changed nor falsified. Whether what was concealed in a scroll is true or not is not the issue. The concern is the *disclosure and implementation* of what they have already decided upon and hidden in the scroll. On the scroll, Bauckham (1993:249) writes, “it is a reasonable conclusion, then, that the scroll which the One who sits on the throne holds in the right hand (5:1) is his secret purpose of establishing his kingdom on earth.” The matter to be concerned with is also whether the person to reveal will faithfully disclose and not fake, falsify or change and distort the content and the meaning of the document. Now, we can conclude that whatever the sense of the scroll might be, the reader should trust its content because the person revealing and executing it is *worthy*.⁴⁵ His testimony is yes and amen. Considering 6:2, 3, 5, 7, 9, 12; 8:1, the action of opening the seals has much to do with *revealing and carrying out* God’s divine purposes about the Church and the whole cosmos.

3.4.3. The basis of Christ’s worthiness.

The triumph is *the factor* which makes the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David *capable of* holding, breaking, opening and looking inside the scroll. This victory is already achieved in the past.⁴⁶ The Lamb’s prior conquering experience

⁴⁵ A lot of ink has been spilled regarding the contents of the scroll and its meaning. Some scholars (cf. Paul, 2018:130) argue for a scroll that has an Old Testament background e.g. Ezekiel 2 whilst others (Cf. Beale, 1999:339-346) argue for a Greco-Roman backdrop or sometimes both. Some argue (cf. Bauckham, 1993:243-266) that the opening of the seven seals found in the second section of the book (4 – 7), and the sounding of the seven trumpets in the third section (8 – 7) are not the content of the scroll, but preparatory judgment. This scholarship argues that the scroll of chapter 5 is the same as the “little” scroll of chapter 10. Hence, this view holds a different meaning of both the scroll and the opening of its seals. I strongly recommend Bauckham (1993:243-266) who a strong supporter of this position. The researcher of this study does not want to enter in this contentious debate. Whatever the meaning of the scroll is, the point is that Jesus happens to be the one who is worthy to open the scroll and break the seals based on the sole reason that he was slain. His sacrificial death is what qualifies him to take open the scroll.

⁴⁶ “Johns’ rhetorical exegesis of the Lamb Christology strongly supports her theological interests: “the Lamb has triumphed in his death and resurrection, not that the Lamb will triumph in the future, subsequent to his death and resurrection” (Royalty, 2005:573).

qualifies him and shows how much he has the right to open the scroll.⁴⁷ Previous experience of conquering and subduing gives the Lamb both the ability and power to open the scroll. Hence, v. 5 can be translated and paraphrased as *because the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. Therefore, he can break and open the scrolls.* The idea is also well argued by Beale (1999:358) that “[t]he sense of “worthy” is explained further in vv. 9c-10 where the basis (οτι [because]) of the Lamb’s worthiness to receive authority is stated.” He can open *because he triumphed.* His triumph is the reason for his ability to open the scroll.

3.4.4. The object of Christ’s victory.

John does not show the *object* of Lion’s victory in 5:5.⁴⁸ What is it that the Lion triumphed over? They do not state it in this text. But what is clear from this text is the fact that the Lion conquered. This conquering makes up the principal ground for his ability and worthiness to break the seals and open the scroll (cf. Kistemaker, 2007:205). The Greek verb (νικάω) which is to be translated; “I triumph”, “I overcome” or even “I conquer” occurs twenty-eight times (28x) in the New Testament.

Grammatically, in Rev. 5:5, the verb ἐνίκησεν (he conquered) is an indicative aorist active 3rd sing. We know that they often portray the aorist tense as a snapshot *aspect*. Elaborating on the aorist tense, Wallace (1996:554) reasonably points out that “it [aorist tense] presents an occurrence, in summary, viewed as a whole from the outside, without regard for the internal make-up of the occurrence.” So, when John used the aorist of νικάω in Rev. 5:5, he describes the action of the Lion’s conquering as a *whole*, taking no interest in the internal working of the activity of triumphing.⁴⁹

However, elsewhere, when νικάω has Christ as the subject, its object is first Satan (cf. Lk. 11:18) who is referred to as *a strong man*, “but when someone stronger

⁴⁷ Royalty (2005:572) “While scholars had assumed that τό ἄρνιον translated as “ram,” combines various messianic traditions from Second Temple Judaism, Johns shows that the Lamb image in Rev 5:5 connotes vulnerability rather than the power of an apocalyptic redeemer figure.” “The term ἄξιος, “worthy,” does not simply mean “able” (i.e., the opposite of οὐδεὶς ἐδύνατο, “no one was able” in v 3), but it means rather “qualified” in the sense of having the proper qualifications to perform this special task” (Aune, 1997:347).

⁴⁸ Johns (2003:148) concludes that “the concept of nonviolence or vulnerability seems most capable of characterizing the symbolism expressed in most of these symbolic uses of Lamb.” This vulnerability, according to Siebeck is not helpless victimization but leads to victory” (2003:108).

⁴⁹ This is what Wallace (1996:557) calls constative Aorist.

attacks and overpowers (νικήση) him, he takes away the armour in which the man trusted and divides up his plunder” (Lk. 11:22).⁵⁰ The “someone stronger” than the “strong man” is in this context, Christ himself. The second object of νικάω having Christ as the subject is *the world*. Speaking to his disciples, Jesus said, “... But take heart! I [Jesus] have overcome (νενίκηκα) the world” (Jn. 16:33). In Rev. 17:14, the object of the Lamb’s victory are *the ten kings alongside the beast*, “[t]hey will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb *will conquer* (νικήσει) them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful.”⁵¹ Unlike in Rev. 5:5 and Lk. 11:22 here, the victory though sure is portrayed in the future tense. Coming to 1 John, νικάω is used in connection with the triumph of the community of faith over the *evil one*, the *world* and *false teachers* (1 Jn. 2:13, 14; 4:4; 5:4, 5). The victory in connection to the use of νικάω is then over Satan himself who is the ruler of this evil world, over the world as a system which is in constant opposition against the purposes of God and over the false teachers and their false doctrines.

It is, therefore, plausible that even in Rev. 5, the implied *object of* Jesus’ victory could be Satan, his rival system and the errors of false teachers.⁵² This triumph of the Lamb over the evil one and the world is an experience of the past (He triumphed them Rev. 5:5). This triumph is an event which has already taken place but has lasting effects. One of the long-lasting results is the meritorious ability of the slain Lamb *to reveal and implement* the plans and purposes of God on the benefits of the Church. It is ironic the way by which the Lamb acquired his victory. The Lion conquers initially by suffering as a slain Lamb. This juxtaposition implies that, in their struggle against the world, the community of faith who are followers of the Lamb should remember that He too suffered at the hand of the world but triumphed over it. His destiny is, therefore, to be theirs if they persevere. This is why in Revelation; the

⁵⁰ McDonald (1996:34) also comments that “ [a]side from Revelation where it appears sixteen times, the verb “to conquer” [nikan) is much more frequent in the Johannine corpus than elsewhere in the New Testament: of the other eleven New Testament occurrences of the word, one is in the Fourth Gospel, and six are in 1 John. Within this tradition, Jesus has “conquered the world” (Jn. 16:33) and so have Christians (1 Jn. 5:4,5). Christians have, therefore, “conquered the evil one” and the false prophets who belong to “the world” (1 Jn. 2:13, 14; 4:4-5).”

⁵¹ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Rev. 17:14). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

⁵² Answering the question, “to what event does ἐνίκησεν ‘has conquered’ refer?” Trail (2003: 143) answers that “it points to Christ’s conquering by his self-sacrifice on the cross [Ln, Wal]. The tense of ‘conquered’ is aorist pointing to a specific event that occurred in the past [Alf, Ln]. As a Lion he defeated the enemies of God [EC]” writes, Trail (2003:1430).

community of faith is described as “those who follow the Lamb wherever he goes” and in 14:4-5 are even likened to the Lamb of Isa 53:7-9. *They follow the Lamb not only in victory but also in how victory is achieved—through suffering and death.* This identification is enriched by the use of σφάζω (slaughter) for the plight of the saints and the Lamb (5:6; 12; 6:9; 13:8; 18:24; note the striking similarity of the portrayal of the slain Lamb in Rev. 5:6 and Rom. 8:36) (Beale, 1999:353)

3.4.5. The Father was the agent of the Son’s slaughter.

The Father is the *implied agent* of Son’s slaughter in Revelation. This does not mean that God physically slew his Son. It rather signifies that the death of the Son was in the perfect and sovereign will of the Father. There was the voluntary death of the Son who was given voluntarily as a sacrifice by the Father in the realization of his wonderful plan. Earlier in this study, the researcher pointed out that the lexeme σφάζω falls into the category of physical harm rather than a psychological one. The cause (agent) behind the action denoted by the lexeme σφάζω can either be persons or circumstances. Interestingly, in Revelation, the agent seems to be God as the lexeme applies to the Lamb—*God the Father slew the Lamb*. In contrast, the *inhabitants of the earth* (earth-dwellers), the followers of the beast are the cause, and agents in the application of the lexeme σφάζω to the followers of the Lamb, the Church, i.e. the redeemed of the earth.

Therefore, the redeemed of the earth (the community of faith) are slain by the inhabitants of the earth and by the beast, whereas God the Father slays the Lamb. This conclusion is based on grammatical grounds of the divine passive of σφάζω, which is used in connection to the Lamb. For, in its Christological applicability, John uses σφάζω in the passive voice. Rev. 5 and 13, “Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if *it had been slain...*” 5:6; “You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals because *you were slain*” 5:9; “... worthy is the Lamb, *who was slain...*” 5:12; “the Lamb *who was slain from the creation of the world*” 13:8. On this, Wallace (1996:437) discusses that “the passive is also used when *God is the obvious agent*. Many grammars call this a *divine passive* (or theological passive), assuming that its use was due to the Jewish aversion to using the divine name” [my italics]. So, having the Father who by nature is loving, merciful and gracious as the ultimate agent of the slaughtering of his Son, one can see why the whole imagery of the slain Lamb

becomes an incredible tool for the healing and comfort of God's people. Using this lexeme was, therefore, meant to give the readers a different perspective of the suffering and death of Christ within their sufferings. It is a significant reason why John is neither ashamed nor afraid to use the metaphor of the Lamb twenty-eight (28x) times as the essential and prominent title of Christ in Revelation. Not only the Lamb but the *Lamb slaughtered by God the Father*.

Of all the three titles given to Christ in Rev. 5, namely the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David and the slain Lamb, the latter is the prevailing one and the most preferred in the entire narrative over the former. This is so because the latter fulfills the former. The Father, who *appears to* be the slaughtering agent of the Son, is perfect. Everything the Father does is excellent and accurate according to his character and attributes. God, the Father is wise. He knows and understands everything and knows how to appropriately and correctly apply that knowledge to life. His wisdom and perfection are consequently the rationales behind his action of slaughtering the Son. He is the ultimate agent of His Son's slaughter. He does it first in His power for the sake of His glory and honour, and second, for the benefit of the Church—the followers of His Son.⁵³

This concept of the passive theological use of the lexeme σφάζω echoed the narrative of father Abraham, who was to slaughter his son, Isaac in Gen. 22. Further, to use the theological passive of the lexeme σφάζω about the death of Christ, John might have been alluding to the Isaianic suffering servant who is pictured to be punished, stricken and afflicted by God (Isa. 53:4). In Isaiah, the death and pain of the suffering servant are pictured in substitutionary undertones— “But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities” (Isa. 53:5).⁵⁴ The suffering servant's death is also beneficial in the sense that peace and healing are brought to the substitutes (Isa. 53:5).

The Father slaughters the Lamb. The earth-dwellers slaughter the followers of the Lamb. Hence, on the one hand, God is the ultimate agent of the slaughtering of his

⁵³ An explicit agent would sometimes be obtrusive or would render the sentence too complex, perhaps reducing the literary effect (e.g. 1 Cor. 1:13). Here in Rev. 5:6 the suppression of the agent because of the negative connotations, if it were made explicit, also here (cf. Jn. 2:20 – “this temple was built ...” (Wallace, 1996:437).

⁵⁴ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Isa. 53:5). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

Son, and the inhabitants of the earth are the agents of the massacre of the *redeemed from the earth*. Nevertheless, these are under the sovereignty of the Lamb. For it is the Lamb who determines the course of history by breaking and opening the seals.

Both God, the Father, and the slaughtered victim, the Son are *worthy* in Revelation (cf. 4:11; 5:12). The Lion, who is also the Root, turns out to be the Lamb in Rev. 5. John was ordered as he *heard from* one elder to “behold (see), the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered so he can open the scroll and its seven seals.”⁵⁵ When he looks, he sees neither the Lion nor the Root, but the Lamb instead (v. 6).⁵⁶ In other words, John is told to see how the hopes embedded in the lion, and root imageries are surprisingly fulfilled in the Lamb who was slain (cf. Bauckham, 1998:180-181). Caird (1966:75) observes well that

[i]t is almost as if John was saying to us at one point after another: ‘whenever the Old Testament says “Lion”, read “Lamb”.’ Whenever that Old Testament speaks of the victory of the Messiah of the overthrow of the enemies of God, we are to remember that the gospel recognizes no other way of achieving these ends than the way of the cross.⁵⁷

Besides that, the researcher would argue that by associating the concept of “being able to open the scroll” with the Lion on the one hand and that of “worthy of taking the scroll” with the Lamb, on the other hand, John was proposing a different reading of all the messianic hopes to his readers. It is as if he was saying read “Lamb” whenever the Old Testament says, Lion. Read “the Lamb is worthy” whenever the Old Testament says “the Lion is able.” Read the Lamb *is slain whenever* the Old Testament says, the Lion *has triumphed*. Therefore, the conquering ability of the Lion can only be achieved and make sense *through the* slaughtering worthiness of

⁵⁵ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Rev. 5:5). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

⁵⁶ The connection between what John hears and what he sees has been noticed and worked on by many scholars. For instance, Koester (2001:77) points out that “the answer that John receives uses images that play on the difference between what is heard and what is seen.”

⁵⁷ Koester (2001:78) puts it this way, “[w]hat John *hears* about the Lion recalls promises from the Old Testament, and what he *sees* in the Lamb reflects the crucifixion of Christ. Both images point to the same reality” [italics originals].

the Lamb. It is from this point and onwards that the Lamb imagery takes priority and gets a richer meaning in John's narrative.

3.4.6. Jesus' messianic titles and its Old Testament allusions.

The messianic expectations as connoted in the Lion and the Root imageries are fulfilled in the slaughtered Lamb metaphor. This Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, is no other than "Lamb standing, as though it had been slain."⁵⁸ The allusion to Gen. 49:9 and Isa. 11:1, 10 of the Lion of the tribe of Judah and the Root of David imageries, has already been noticed by many scholars. Explaining on these texts Bauckham (1998:180,1) argues that "[b]oth Old Testament texts were *loci classici* of Jewish messianic hopes in John's time." Hence, on the one hand, by juxtaposing the imagery of the Lion and the Root next to the Lamb, John is proving the point that whatever hopes connote these imageries have been fully fulfilled in Christ, the Lamb slain by God the Father. By presenting the Lamb as slain, John shows a surprising and unexpected way through which the Old Testament messianic hopes have been fulfilled—through the cross (cf. Trail, 2003:145). This way to victory could have been a shocking surprise, especially to John's readers who were expecting "the Messiah as the warrior prince who will conquer the enemies of Israel" (Bauckham, 1998:181).

Talking about the Lamb, as we have already shown, John uses the concept of *worthiness* or *deservingness* instead of the concept of *ability* that he had applied to the Lion imagery. On the one hand, the Lion *can* open the scroll and its seals (v. 5). On the other, the Lamb is worthy (ἄξιος) to take the scroll and open its seals (v. 9). Since the Lamb and the Lion refer to the same character, these words, i.e. able and worthy could mean the same thing and thus used *interchangeably*, i.e. he is able meaning that He is fit and vice versa. Or we could perceive one of these terms as *the ground for* the other, i.e. the Lamb deserves because he can take, break, open and look inside the scroll—He is the Lion because He is the Lamb in the first place. But it is more likely, as we have already established, that one of these terms can be perceived as *the means through* which the other one is achieved.

⁵⁸ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Rev. 5:6). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

3.4.7. The Father's worthiness in the creation and the Son's in redemption.

The worthiness of the Father's worship is grounded in creation in Rev. 4. Yet the son's worthiness is rooted in his redemptive work (Rev. 5). The Son's slaughter which makes the redemption of God people possibly brings the deservedness of his adoration in Revelation. Interestingly, the term *worthy* (ἄξιος) is used in Revelation once (1x) in connection to God the Father (4:11).⁵⁹ It is the Father, the agent of the slaughtering of the Lamb who in the first place is worthy in Revelation. The Father deserves to receive glory and honour and power. His worthiness is in connection with his work of *creation*— “for you created all things, and by your will, they existed and were created” (4:11).⁶⁰ The ἄξιος, however, applied three times (3x) to the Lamb (5:4, 9, 12). The Lamb is worthy in connection with his work of *redemption*.

Creation and redemption consequently stand out as incredible works for which the Father and the Son are both worthy of the glory. The Father creates but sin corrupts that creation and the Son redeems it. The Father and the Son, therefore, deserve the glory. Evil does not have the last word, rather the Father and the Son have it.

Remarkably, the Lamb who is the agent of *redemption* is portrayed as slain *before the creation of the world* (13:8) so much that when nature is corrupted by evil, the very slaughtering of the Lamb by the Father becomes the remedy and the means through which creation is redeemed.⁶¹ God's commitment to preserving his creation as expressed in the Noahic covenant (Gen. 9:8-17) is fulfilled in the work of the Lamb. Nothing, not even evil, catches God the Father by surprise. Redemption is, therefore, never God's afterthought. God's remedy is not reactive but proactive. Hence the Father is worthy because He created. The Lamb is worthy because He redeemed. Here in chapter 5, Gorman (2011:109) points out “the focus is on the power of his death.” He (2011:109) argues that “the Lamb's power, his conquering has been manifested, not in the raw power assisted with a lion, but in *the power of*

⁵⁹ See Aune's submission on this (1997:309).

⁶⁰ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Rev. 4:11). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

⁶¹ On the debates on whether the phrase “before the creation of the world” modifies the names which have not been written in the book of life or the Lamb who was slaughtered see Beale (1999:703). Commenting on this, Paul (2018:233) argues that “[f]rom the Greek texts, it is not clear what ‘from the foundation of the world’ (AT) refers to – whether names that written, or the Lamb who was slain; comparison with 17:8 could suggest the former, but the grammar here suggests the latter.”

faithfulness to death, a violent death that resulted in 'ransoming,' or redeeming, a royal and priestly people of God" [my emphasis].

How about the ideas of triumphing and being slain, which are joined in Rev 5? The Lion is able because he *triumphed* (v. 5). The Lamb is *worthy because he was slain* (v. 9). Here again, to *triumph*, and to *be slain* appear to be used synonymously. Here, the traumatic connotation pregnant with the concept of being slain is transformed into triumphal, victorious, therapeutic and conquering undertones. To be slain is, therefore, to triumph. It could also serve as the *means through* which the Lamb triumphed. He triumphed through his atoning death on the cross.⁶² The hopes of a triumphant and conquering Messiah who in the Old Testament was perceived as the Lion and the Root are accomplished through the slaughtering of the Lamb.

Therefore, victory over God's enemies is via the cross. On this, Beale (1999:359) contends that "[σ]φάζω (slaughter)" is the continuation of the Passover—Isaiah 53 of v. 6. The Lamb's overcoming through death is a presupposition for his worthiness to receive sovereign authority." The Lamb who is also the Lion of the tribe Judah and the Root of David is able and worthy to *take, break, open* and *look inside* the scroll. Siebeck, (2003:107) points out that "a study of the semantic domain of 'Lamb' in biblical and extra-biblical writings results in the cautious conclusion that 'Lamb' in the Apocalypse has a non-sacrificial connotation and expresses vulnerability."⁶³

Ewing (2006:72) makes the same point as he comments that "the Biblical use of these words [*arnion* and *arnos*] in the Greek Old Testament shows that the animal depicted is a young lamb, while the diminutive form emphasizes youth and vulnerability. This is not the case in Revelation. It seems, instead of that, both strength and vulnerability are present in Revelation's Lamb. Because the Lamb is first identified as the Lion and has seven horns (5:6) shows how strong and

⁶² "Finally, although Johns does believe that the triumph of the Lamb comes through death and resurrection, he often settles for language that asserts "evil is conquered by the death of the Lamb" (Siebeck, 2003:108) and that defines "victory as a non-violent resistance to the point of death" (170). More explicit emphasis that victory comes through God's overturning of death might have been helpful" (Siebeck, 2003:109)

⁶³ "Chapter 4, "As if Slain," looks at Revelation's Lamb within the context of the performance of masculinity in the Roman world. In contrast to Johns, for whom the Lamb expressed a Christian ethic of vulnerability yet resistance in the face of evil and domination, Frilingos sees the Lamb as a destabilizing image for ancient constructs of masculinity" Siebeck (2003:574)

powerful the Revelation Lamb is portrayed. It is in this context some scholars argue for the Ram as the Lamb of Revelation. We can imply the sacrificial connotation in John's use of σφάζω. This word evokes the Passover Lamb, who is an atoning sacrifice.

The Lamb's competence, ability, and worthiness are also portrayed in how he is described in v. 6 (cf. 7:17) —the Lamb is standing at the *centre* of the throne.⁶⁴ He is the focal point of all the activities concerning the whole human story. He is standing. This position is a posture of readiness to represent on behalf of the people he bought with his blood and who follow him wherever he goes. This position of "standing" could also mean that the Lamb was alive, ready for action and that he had risen from death (cf. Trail, 2003:144). Beale (1999:352) makes a significant point that

[t]here is no doubt that v. 6 portrays Jesus as resurrected and that the resurrection is essential to his overcoming. He conquered death by being raised from the dead. But the present victorious effect of the Lamb's overcoming resides not only in the fact that the Lamb continues to "stand" but also in the fact that it continues to exist as a slaughtered Lamb. The perfect participle ἐσφαγμένον ("having been slain") expresses an abiding condition as a result of the last act of being slain (like perfect tense "crucified" in 1 Cor. 2:2) [my italics].

The Revelation Lamb has seven horns and seven eyes. It implies that He is Almighty, all-powerful and all-knowing. Therefore, the imagery of the Lamb, who was slain, was never intended to hurt or traumatise the readers. It is not the imagery that inspires hopelessness and helplessness in the original readers. It was alternatively meant to generate comfort, healing and perseverance to the followers of the Lamb amid distress and the threat of death.

3.4.8. Christ's event is beneficial.

The slaughter of the Lamb reveals not only the evil of humanity, but it also provides some redemptive benefice. Using Girardian theories, Finamore regards Christ's

⁶⁴ Bruce (1979:1689) thinks that the best translation is "standing between the throne of the four living creatures." This is according to him a clearer rendering than 'in the midst of the throne'

event, i.e., his life, death and resurrection as *revelatory than beneficial*. Through Girard's lenses, Finamore (2009:133) argues that the atonement "reveals the truth about humanity and that truth brings about the end of existing forms of human social life." Finamore does not agree wholly with the idea that asserts that the atoning death of Christ is purely beneficial (2009:132). Hence, he (2009:132) argues that "the consequences of Jesus' ministry cannot be understood as being *wholly beneficial* in any straightforward way" [my italics]. The italics show that there should then be a room for Jesus' ministry as being not wholly but of some benefit if one reads Finamore correctly. He (2009:132) then points out that "in many respects, these consequences can have adverse consequences for humanity." Picking up from Girard, Finamore (2009:132), claims that

these effects of Jesus's work are described in several places in the New Testament and are described in terms reminiscent of the experiences that Girard associates with societies experiencing the breakdown of their system of differentiation.

Remarkably, Finamore (2009:132) claims that "these phenomena form a major theme of Revelation in which the Lamb of God, under being slain, is shown *to reveal the truth about human culture, and to initiate the eschatological process*" [my italic]. Thus, for both Finamore and Girard (2009:133), "the death of Christ *does not* provide a covering for sin, rather it uncovers sin. It reveals the nonviolence of God and the violence of all human cultures" [my italics]. This argument actively challenges the traditional understanding of the Christ event, particularly of the cross (2009:133). Coming to the book of Revelation, Finamore (2009:135) argues that it is wrong to understand the death of Jesus in sacrificial categories. Hence, that Jesus died for others is *foreign to* the book, according to Finamore. He instead claims that the Christ event, his death, in particular, is in Revelation portrayed in *Christus Victor* categories [his emphasis].

No matter how thought-provoking Girardian theories are, Finamore's submission based on those theories on the atonement as being *wholly revelatory* rather than beneficial does not seem to convince.⁶⁵ For picturing Christ's death as only

⁶⁵ For further reading on the non-sacrificial death as advocated by Girard see René Girard in *The Hidden Since the Foundation of The World*(1978:180-223) and in the *Girard Reader*(1996:177-188).

revelatory is to confuse it with the role of the Law in the unfolding of God's redemptive plan. Girard advocates for the non-sacrificial reading of the gospel text (1978:180 ff.). However, the death of Jesus in Revelation is portrayed in sacrificial and redemptive categories (cf. 1:5; 5:9-10).

Through Pauline lenses, we know that the essential function of the Law in the telling of the metanarrative of the salvation plan is to reveal God's nature on the one hand and man's nature on the other side (cf. Rom. 7:7ff). Further, revealing the Father and who the man was meant to be is just one aspect of Christ's event. This concept is one reason the Gospels tell us not only about the death of Christ, but his whole life. It is not the entire essence, though. In fact, by showing us the life of Jesus, the Gospel writers make a point of the fact that Jesus qualifies as the perfect sacrifice for sin. It is true, especially from John's Gospel, that it is at the cross where the climax of the Father's love is fully revealed. It is at the cross where Scripture reveals the symbioses of God's justice and mercy meet in one event—the cross.

The disclosure of these truths is not all that for which the death of Christ stands. If Jesus is the *telos* (end or goal) of the Law as Paul argues in Romans (10:4), surely, He is expected to play a far more significant role than the Law. His life and death will be pointless if all they can manage is to reveal the non-violence of God and the violence of human cultures. Since, through the Law, one can already see how non-violent God is and how violent human cultures are. The researcher is not suggesting that these truths are not revealed in the cross, but the point this researcher is making is that *limiting* the death of Christ to only and wholly revealing these truths is to devoid the cross of its true meaning in God's incredible plan of salvation. According to Paul (2018:133), one of the three connecting ideas of the Old Testament in depicting the Lamb as bearing the marks of having been slaughtered is that

[t]he images recall the slaughtering of lambs (amongst other animals) in the sacrifice of atonement; the latter language of 5:9-10 recalls the opening statement in 1:5-6. Jesus “has freed us *from our sins* by his blood and has made us be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father” [italics original].

3.4.9. The slaughter was Christ's very identity.

We should regard the slaughter of the Lamb not only as something which happened to him but as something which has become an integral part of who he is. He will always be identified as the Lamb, who was slain. Coming to the fact of Jesus as being slain, John's vision of reality as far as the description of the Lamb is concerned does *seem* to be unclear as it is exhibited in the worship of the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders. For John, the Lamb was looking *as if* it had been slain (v. 6). This might be merely the problem of translation. Beale (1999:352) rightly points out that "[t]he translation 'as though slain' is unnecessary and misleading as if the Lamb only looked slain but was not; 'as slain'." Besides that, Paul (2018:132) writes, "the Lamb appears as if it has been slain, not in the sense of mere pretence, but it bears the marks of having been slaughtered."

In the song of the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures, it is explicitly clear that the Lamb *was slain* (v. 9). That is who he is. He is the Lamb who was slain. Being slain is part of his identity. It is Christ's identity marker. It is his mark of worthiness and his ability to open the scrolls. It is his mark of power and sovereignty to direct and control history. He is in charge of history because of who he is, the slain Lamb. He is not merely the Lamb, but the slain Lamb (v. 12). That the Lamb is identified as the one who was slain is reinforced in 13:8, "and all who dwell on the earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain."⁶⁶

This identity of the Lamb as slain goes way before the foundations of the world. It pre-exists even the creation of humanity. It is, as said earlier, never an afterthought in God's decrees. He is the slain Lamb from eternity past to eternity future. In God's economy, Christ has always been the slain Lamb. He is a Lamb even before one thinks of him as a Lion of the tribe of Judah or the Root of David. Being slain is not something that merely happens to him at a time in history, but it is who he truly is from eternity past. It, therefore, makes sense that it is the Father who ultimately has slaughtered this Lamb. For the Father is the "One who is and was and is to come" (4:8). It also explains the passive theological use of the lexeme σφάζω in Revelation.

⁶⁶ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Rev. 13:8). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

No man was there before the creation of the world to slay the Lamb. The Father was. He is the slain Lamb from the beginning of the world.

Therefore, one cannot separate the Lamb from the fact that He was slain. We can never separate Christ from the cross. Talking of the Lamb in Revelation evokes directly the sentiments of him being slain. Fee (2011:183) rightly points out that “even though “the Lamb... was slain” at a given point in history during the reign of Tiberius Caesar, what the Roman emperor and his army did not know was that their execution of a supposed revolutionary was, in fact, *God’s ultimate redemptive moment which has been orchestrated from all eternity*—because at the heart of the Christian gospel is the awesome reality that God the Creator is also God the Redeemer” [my italics].

3.4.10. The lexeme σφάζω and the literary context of Rev. 4-5.

Despite many scholars’ disagreements on the structure of Revelation, there is at least a consensus among them that chapters 4 and 5 are key to the understanding of the rest of the book if not to the whole book.⁶⁷ Beasley-Murray (1981:104) observes that these chapters “are the fulcrum of Revelation.”⁶⁸ Having considered the importance of these chapters, it is, therefore, significant for the writer to use thrice (3x) in one of these critical chapters the lexeme σφάζω to introduce the hero of the book as the slain Lamb. Commenting on Rev. 5, Finamore (2009:179) argues that “if the rest of Revelation flows out of this scene, then its interpretation is of considerable importance.” These chapters are meant to provide lenses through which the whole book must be read, explained and understood. They appeal to the different and unexpected responses from the readers—acceptance of their traumatisation as part of who they are in following the slain Lamb. Hendriksen (2007:82) is right as he contends that these chapters form a picture of the whole universe from the throne’s perspective.⁶⁹ Hence, the entire narrative of the book should be read and understood from the standpoint of the one who stands at the centre of the throne, the slain Lamb.

⁶⁷ Minear (1968:67).

⁶⁸ Cf. Rowland (1982:415); “It focuses on Revelation 5, which provides the “rhetorical fulcrum” of the whole Apocalypse” (Siebeck 2003:108).

⁶⁹ (cf. Finamore, 2009:179).

The call that John received to “come up here” in 4:1 is an invitation to change his lens to use different ones through which he must view the whole universe and whatever happens to the followers of the Lamb correctly. It is like the perspective one could get when viewing Victoria Falls. It depends on which side one stands. Victoria Falls are one wonder of the world and are shared by Zambia and Zimbabwe. However, many visitors to Victoria Falls do not realise that you will have a hugely different view of the Falls depending on which country you view them from. Many people contend that if you are hoping to find the best view of the Falls, then you should see the Zimbabwean side. It is because 75% (80%) of the water goes over the abyss opposite the Zimbabwean side, and the view of the cascade is best from this side. The water plunges over the edge of the gorge, forming high billowing clouds of spray causing the Falls to be named in the local language, *Mosi-oa-tunya* meaning “the smoke that thunders.”⁷⁰

The point is not which side has a better view of whether the Zambian or Zimbabwean side. But quite the perspective one gets on whichever side of the Falls they stand is different. Then it does not take long to cross from the bottom of one border to the other and get a different view. As a result, how one reacts to the incredible grandeur of the Falls depends on the perspective they take. The impressions, emotions and feelings, thoughts and actions are even different depending on which side one is standing to view the Falls.

The same applies to John. They invite him to ‘*come up here*’ (ch.4:1), to cross to the other side of the ‘border’ to get different, but God’s view of the world and of everything is to take place. John, as Hendriksen (2007:82), shows is to view “what must take place after this” from the *throne aspect* (4:2), which according to Aune (1997:284) is from the sovereignty of God. The whole universe, including the tribulations of God’s people and perplexities of life, is to be viewed from the *heavenly perspective*. Caird (1966:62) rightly argues that “for the moment the relevance of this theme to the pastoral needs of the churches is held in abeyance” (cf. Hendriksen, 2007:82). It is from the *heavenly perspective*; one will get a different and better view of things they neither understand nor like, and even of things which they could not agree. The Christological aspect of Christ as the slain Lamb in these chapters is therefore critical of John’s theological agenda. Finamore (2009:179) writes,

⁷⁰ <http://www.siyabona.com/victoria-falls-zimbabwe-vs-zambia.html>

“[t]his suggests that all the plagues of Revelation are a consequence of events described in this vision.”

One cannot overlook the significance of the throne in these two critical chapters of Revelation. Its frequent occurrence (17 times in these two chapters only) speaks volumes and informs the readers of the theological agenda of the writer. When speaking of the throne, Caird (1966:62) points out that “[f]rom first to last John’s vision is dominated by this symbol of divine sovereignty.” The wounded Lamb enhances the significance of the throne through his posture of standing at the very centre of the throne. The seer cannot miss the fact that the Lamb is at the centre of the throne. He becomes the central figure of the sovereign rule of God and the interpretative key of the book.

3.5. THE ECCLESIOLOGICAL DIMENSION OF ΣΦΑΖΩ.

In the ecclesiological dimension, the lexeme σφάζω applies three times (3x) to the community of faith. These are the followers of the Lamb. The term occurs twice (2x) in the second section, i.e. 4–7 cf. 6:4, 9 and once (1x) in the sixth section 17–19 cf. 18:24. The expression “to make men slay each other” 6:4 shows that the church is a community of human beings living among other human beings. There are two categories of men in this passage, the agents of the slaughter and the victims, yet both are human beings. Men do these malicious things to their fellow men. The Church seems to be on the victim’s side. Though it is not explicit in 6:4 that the community of faith is the one on the victim’s side, the context explicitly shows it. John uses σφάζω as “[t]he term shows death by violence” (Rogers Jr. & Rogers III, 1998:627).

Even the instrument “μάχαιρα” given the rider of the second horse has that connotation. “This was a short Roman sword symbolic of violent death, war and the power of the authorities to punish evildoers” (Rogers, Jr & Rogers III, 1998:627). In 6:9-11, the victims of the slaughter are now explicitly labelled as fellow servants and brothers “οἱ σύνδουλοι αὐτῶν καὶ οἱ ἀδελφοὶ.” Rev. 18:24 points out the blood of prophets and saints “αἷμα προφητῶν καὶ ἁγίων” to mean that these victims are not only fellow human beings or fellow servants and brothers, but are also prophets and saints. Men on the victim side in 6:4 are now clearly described as servants of the Lamb. They relate to each other as brothers because they are a family. They are

saints because they set them apart for the Lamb and for prophesying (witnessing) to the world. Hence, they are called prophets. The whole community of these brothers is a prophetic movement in this dispensation, the 1260 days to use Revelation's language. They are witnesses of the faithful witness (1:5).

In as far as the community of faith is concerned in Revelation, they use the lexeme σφάζω in a more profane way. It holds, however, the same connotation of a traumatic, violent and brutal killing. Though in 6:9, they liken the death of the believers to the execution of sacrifices, as they did it in the Old Testament sacrificial system, their end is not for ritual purposes. Beale and other commentators have reasonably related the death of the believers in 6:9 to the Old Testament sacrificial system. On this Beale (1999:379) writes,

[t]he notion of persecution is also apparent from the observation John uses that the word for "slaughter" (σφάζω) without exception to refer to the death of Christ or his followers (5:6, 9, 12; 6:9; 13:8; 18:24; so likewise sphagé elsewhere in the NT; even the reference to the beast's slain head in 13:3 is a parody of Christ's suffering).

3.5.1. The slaughter of the saints in Rev 6:9-11.

Despite the comparison to the Old Testament sacrifices, the killing of the saints in Revelation is strictly not for any ritual purposes. Some early church fathers and reformers have used Rev. 6:9-11 in different ways for different hermeneutic purposes. Cyprian (c.205-258) who was of a view that they should use Revelation regarding both past and present appealed many times to Rev. 6:9-11. This appeal is as Finamore (2009:9) puts it "to calm those eager for vengeance, to show the benefits of martyrdom and to discourage over-reliance on the merits of the martyrs who may not command God." Clement of Alexandria (c.200) uses Rev. 6:9-11 to draw ethical teaching from it. He argues on its basis that "Christians should reject dyed cloths for these are made to be looked at. They should wear only simple garments" (Finamore, 2009:9). Luther is probably right by contending that the rider of the red horse (6:2) refers to the persecution of believers by the temporal movement" (Finamore, 2009:18).

Corsini (1983) has a purely ahistorical, spiritual approach to the book of Revelation (cf. Finamore, 2009:30). Corsini (1983:118-137) uses a threefold framework of understanding to unlock the mystery of the book—symbolism, allegory and typology. Based on this framework as Finamore (2009:30) observes, he argues that the Revelation “describes the move from the old economy to the new one.”

Revelation is consequently about Christology, not eschatology, and is concerned about the death and the resurrection of Jesus and the end of the earthly temple, according to Corsini. It is, according to him, about the end of the cult and not the end of the world. Using this approach to the book, Corsini (1983:135,6), therefore argues that Rev. 4:1-11 is an allegory of creation and goes further to say that it is an allegory of the old economy, while 5:1-14 is an allegory of redemption.⁷¹ Commenting on the first four horsemen, Corsini (1983:140) suggests that “the one common theme, the horse is the symbol of human nature and the colours which change each horse and the different horsemen are shadows of the various moments of humanity’s history. It is possible, therefore, to see in the series an allegory of the spiritual history of man before the coming of Christ, a story which John has from the Genesis account of the fall of man (Gen. 1:26ff).” Further, using his allegorical approach on 6:9-11, Corsini (1983:152, 4) argues as Finamore (2009:30, 31) points out that

The souls seen and heard at the opening of the fifth seal are the martyrs of the old economy while the event of the sixth seal refers to the death of Christ. Silence comes with the seven seals because the ancient cult administered by the angels has come to an end; all creation waits for the new cult that will begin with the resurrection of Christ, the new Passover.⁷²

3.5.2. The slaughter of the saints, considering the structure of Revelation.

The approach of this study differs from the one elaborated above. As noted in the method, the researcher of this undertaking agrees with scholars “who believe that the

⁷¹ (cf. Finamore, 2009:30).

⁷² Commenting on this kind of approach which is predominantly allegorical, Finamore (2009:31) rightly observes that “one of the principal difficulties of allegorical and other ahistorical approaches is that there is no control over the range of interpretation which can be offered for the different images”

series of plagues recapitulate one another” (Finamore, 2009:39). Further, the researcher takes Hendriksen’s approach (2007:16-23) by contending for not only the series of the plagues, which is to be viewed in a cycle but the entire book is also cyclical in its structure. Hence, as noted by Finamore (2009:39), Bonsirven is right as he writes, “the three groups of seven must symbolise three series that are simultaneous rather than successive.” Torrance (1960:72) puts it this way “the second series is the repetition of the first from a new angle.” Finamore (2009:51) highlighted also that many Christians have had issues with the theology of the book of Revelation, especially about God from an ethical standpoint. It is mostly about the plague series where such concerns are raised. Finamore (2009:52) points out that

[f]or example the prayer of the martyrs at the opening of the fifth seal (Rev. 6:9-11) is regarded as vindictive and indicative of a failure to understand the ethical imperative of forgiveness, while the wrath of the Lamb from which the people of the earth flee during the sixth seal (6:12-17) is treated as an expression of a sub-Christian theology which has failed to grasp the nature of God’s love.

Bultmann (1955:175) argues that the Christian faith, as portrayed in Revelation, is nothing but an inadequate Judaism in a Christian package. However, God’s judgments should not always be taken independently from his justice and his faithfulness to His covenant. Therefore, in his righteousness, God must reward what is right and punish what is evil.

The souls of 6:9 are the ones that are referred to as brothers in 12:10-11. Like Jesus, their triumph is also an experience of the past. They overcome using the blood of the Lamb, not their blood (cf. 6:10). Unlike for the Lamb in Rev. 5:5, the object of their victory is explicitly observed—the dragon. Ironically, what was stated as the cause for them being slain in Rev 12:6, i.e., “the word of God and for the witness, they had borne,”⁷³ is now the means through which they overcome the dragon (12:11). They overcome by the word of their testimony. In Revelation, as already noted, they describe the community of faith as brothers [and sisters] (12:10), and as the saints, the holy ones (8:4; 13:7, 10).

⁷³ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Rev. 6:9). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

Some members of this community, which is described as a kingdom and priests (5:10), are here (6:9) designated as “the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne.”⁷⁴ Unlike for the Lamb, whose agent of slaughter is the Father, the agents of this slaughter are *the inhabitants of the earth* (6:10). The latter expression is John’s way of describing those who have not been purchased by the blood of the slain Lamb, and therefore, have not been made a kingdom or a priesthood.

It is more likely, as already pointed out, that these souls of 6:9 could be the victims of the slaughter found in 6:4. They portray these people of God as the purchased ones (5:9, 14:4); they are the redeemed ones from the earth (14:3). They have the name of the Lamb and the Father on their foreheads (14:1).

3.5.3. Σφάζω and different appellations of God’s people in Revelation.

Bearing the name of the Lamb and the Father on their foreheads shows how much Revelation identifies the community of faith with Christ. Christology always informs ecclesiology in Revelation. It is also important to note that the people of God in Revelation are shown in sharp contrast with the inhabitants of the earth [earth dwellers], for we know them as the *redeemed from the earth*. They are free from pollution, and they are pure (14:4). They offer the Church to both God the Father and the Lamb as firstfruits (14:4). The imagery of firstfruits shows how special they are to God, the Father and the Lamb. Apart from a mark of identification on their foreheads, they have also an incredible streak on their feet, which is *they follow the Lamb wherever he goes* (14:4 cf. Jn. 10:27).

The concept of “*following*” is a significant motif in John’s theology. In the gospel of John 10, they describe the people of God as sheep. The relationship between Christ and his followers is that of the shepherd and his sheep. In that chapter God’s people are known as the *hearers of the shepherd’s voice* and the *followers of the shepherd*—my sheep hear my voice, and they follow me, Jesus said (Jn. 10:27). The Church, in her triumphant state, is blameless; no lie was found in their mouth (14:5). The Church of the book of Revelation is prayerful (8:4). God uses their prayer

⁷⁴ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Rev. 6:9). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

to control and direct history for their benefit. She is the bride of the Lamb (18:24). They also call the church, the holy ones or God's holy people, the saints (18:24).

It gives the impression that in 18:24, the prophets, the saints and all *who have been slain on the earth* are the same people, the Church (the people of God). For, in Rev. 18, the literary context proves that Babylon the great city is judged particularly for the way she treated the community of believers, "God has judged her for the way she treated *you*" [my italics] (18:20). Of course, from the context the "you" refers to the saints, apostles, and prophets (18:20).⁷⁵ These appellations, i.e. prophets, saints and slain on the earth are what God's people are identified within the Apocalypse of John. God's judgment in this chapter is specifically for the sake of none other than the Church. The saints, apostles, and prophets of 18:20 are the ones to whom a voice from heaven refers to as "my people" in 18:4.

The "my people" is how the Old Testament Israel is referred to by God. It has covenantal undertones (cf. Ex. 6). In Ex. 6, God reveals Himself to the nation of Israel as YHWH, which is a covenantal name having the connotation of redemption and owning a people. It is at the close of the age when judgment is shown against God's enemies for the sake of his people, the Church. In 11:18, they refer to the Church as "your servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great."⁷⁶ These, again, are not three categories of people, but a powerful way of presenting in different aspects the same people of God, the community of believers (the followers of the Lamb). They are likewise characterised as "the prophets and the saints and all who have been killed [slain] on earth" in 18:24. Yet again, these, as already pointed out, are not three different categories, but one people of God merely painted in three different colours.⁷⁷ The Church is a *prophetic movement in Revelation*, "... Do not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers who hold to the *testimony of Jesus*. Worship God! For it is the Spirit of *prophecy who bears testimony to Jesus*" [my italics] (cf. 19:10).

⁷⁵ 16:6 cf. 19

⁷⁶ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Rev. 11:18). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

⁷⁷ 16:6 "the blood of your saints and prophets," 18:24 "the blood of prophets and of the saints," 19:2 "the blood of his servants."

3.5.4. God's people are being slaughtered as a prophetic movement.

Looking at the previous pieces of evidence, one can see that prophecy and witnessing (or testifying) are used interchangeably (cf. 11:3, 6, 7). For instance, it said that the two *witnesses* are given the power to *prophecy* (11:3). These *two witnesses* (11:2) are also called *two prophets* (11:10) because what witnesses do in Revelation is to prophecy (11:3 cf. 12:11).⁷⁸ Further, these two witnesses are granted the power to prophecy in 11:3, yet interestingly in v. 7, the writer uses testify to describe their necessary functional role, “[n]ow when they had completed their testimony, the beast that comes up from the Abyss will attack them, and overpower and kill them” [my italics].

Hence, prophecy and testimony are synonymously used to portray the purpose and mission of the Church on earth as a powerful prophetic movement. The preaching of the gospel of Christ is what is described as prophesying in Revelation. Remarkably, it is at the same time the cause of their slaughter and the means through which they overcome. This idea that the *whole of God's people are prophets* agrees with interpreting 11:1-14 of the *two witnesses*, figuratively standing for the *whole Church* rather than understanding them as two individual characters. On this, Bauckham (1998:448) writes, “the two witnesses are not two individual prophets of the future, still less Moses and Elijah in person.” He goes to contend that “They [two witnesses] are the churches in their prophetic and suffering witness during the period of conflict with the beast.” (1998:448).

One thing which can never be taken away from the Revelation church during her time on earth is her duty to witness or prophesy. Her primary mission is to prophesy for 1260 days. The latter is symbolically in parallel with 42 months, the period where the massacre of the witnesses and prophets of God, the followers of the Lamb, God's holy people is happening.⁷⁹ The followers of the Lamb are now in the great tribulation (7:14).

⁷⁸ According to Siebeck (2003:108) “Johns explores key exegetical terms such as “witness” and “victory,” and investigates the ethical import of the violent imagery.”

⁷⁹ Bauckham (1998:402) points that “...when John uses the figure 42 months, he designates the Apocalyptic period as the beast's time—for trampling and rule (11:2; 13:5), whereas when he uses the figure 1260 days, he designates it as the church's time—for prophesying and protection (11:3; 12:6). On the rationale behind the use of these numbers, one on the beast and one on the church, Bauckham (1998:402)

Based on the preceding, the saints who are prophets are the ones who have been slaughtered on earth by Babylon, the great city (18:24). The city of Babylon is another way of describing the earth-dwellers, the followers of the beast. That the community of believers is a prophetic movement agrees well with interpreting the twenty-four elders as the totality of the community of faith (cf. Beale 1999:556-609). Finamore (2009:140) writes,

[o]ne of the key understandings of Jesus in Revelation is that he is the faithful witness. The term retains its forensic flavour but giving of testimony is related in the text to dying, and so the word and its cognates carry some connotations of the English word martyr. The life, death and resurrection of Jesus bring the testimony of God's truth to the world. His followers are expected to witness to the same truth in the same way as he did, and their testimony will augment the consequences of his.⁸⁰

The latter is correct in as far as the ecclesiology of the book of Revelations is concerned. Coming back to Rev. 6.4 as it points out that peace is taken "from the earth and that *they would* slay one another" (ἵνα ἀλλήλους σφάξουσιν καὶ ἐδόθη) 6:4. Who are those who will slaughter each other? The translation of men as generic would fit in the context. It means that men will kill other men. It is the killing of fellow human beings. The pronoun ἀλλήλους (one another) here does not mean that the murder comes from both sides, because the reciprocity undertone is not always portrayed in ἀλλήλος, even though it is the primary connotation. But what it means is that humans will kill their fellow human beings. The context will then show that the agents of this killing are the followers of the beast, i.e. the earth-dwellers,

helpfully suggests that "[t]his may be because 42 is the sixth rectangular number and corresponds to 36, the triangle root of 666, and so is more closely associated with the beast, whereas both 1260 and its corresponding square 1225 relate to the number of the people of God, 12 (though it is not so obvious in John's Greek)."

⁸⁰ Girard does not have a problem with the way Origen (cf. Frend, 1965:91; *On the Soul* 55; *Antidote to The Scorpion's Bite*; *Exhortation to Martyrdom*; Frend 1965 and Lane Fox 1986:419-492; *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 17) and Tertullian understood the deaths of the saints. The belief that the deaths of Jesus' followers bears the same significance to his own. This means that the deaths of the saints have an atoning connotation (cf. Finamore 2009: 138). Girard agrees in so far as there is a link between the death of Jesus and the deaths of his followers—having the same significance. However, Girard argues for the fact that the death of Jesus reveals or witnesses the truth about the human culture and hence plays a key role in bringing about the end. The same is for the death of Jesus. That Jesus' death has atoning significance is not welcomed in Girard's understanding and submission.

Babylon. Whereas the victims of this killing are the followers of the Lamb.⁸¹ Both sides [slaughterers and slaughtered ones] are men in a generic sense.⁸²

The sword “μάχαιρα” given to the rider of the second horse is a *sacrificial knife used* by the inhabitants of the earth [who are men] to slay the followers of the Lamb [who are also men]. It is partly as Bruce (1979:1691) puts it that the rider of the second horse has much to do with civil war rather than a foreign invasion. This civil war is according to him that which “had recently been experienced during the ‘year of the four emperors’ (AD. 68-69).” He (1979:1691) associates and applies it to the persecution that was launched in A.D. 64. He argues that this persecution must run its course.

We can understand it as a civil war in the sense that it is the killing of men by their fellow men. They gave the rider of the second horse the power to take peace from the earth and to make *the earth dwellers kill the redeemed from the earth*, i.e. followers of the Lamb. Hence, to make that mission possible, a sword “μάχαιρα” was given (Rev. 6:4). Death is not only the fate of the Lamb but also of his followers. In the Apocalypse of John, one of the obvious ways, one identifies the followers of the Lamb is because they are slaughtering them.

Beale (1999:392) writes, “[t]he comparison with Jesus’ suffering is enhanced by the description of the saints as ‘having been slain’ (cf. σφάζω [“slay”] in 5:6, 9, 12 and 6:9).” The purpose of the comparison is to emphasise that, as with Christ, those following him will have their sacrificial suffering and apparent defeat turned into ultimate victory (Beale, 1999:392). The rider of the fourth horse is also given the power to kill. But unlike the second, he has four means of killing a fourth of the earth—the sword (ῥομφαία), famine, plague and by the beasts of the earth (6:8).

Interestingly, it is the *slain* Lamb who opens the fifth seal in which we see the souls of those who have been *slain* (6:9 cf. v. 4). Since the community of believers is a powerful witnessing organisation on earth, the *sword, blood, and death* will never cease to be identified with them. They explain what it means to be the followers of

⁸¹ See Beale (1999:379).

⁸² Commenting on this verse Beale (1999:379) is right as he notes that “the notion of persecution is also apparent from the observation that the word for ‘slaughter’ (σφάζω) is used by John without exception to refer to the death of Christ or his followers (5:6, 9, 12; 6:9; 13:8; 18:24; so likewise (σφαγή) elsewhere in the NT even the reference to the beast’s slain head in 13:3 is a parody of Christ’s suffering)” [my italics]

the Lamb wherever he goes. It is to be identified with the Lamb in everything, particularly in being slain because the one they follow is the slain Lamb. It is because of the word of God and the testimony that the followers of the Lamb maintain, which makes up the primary cause of their slaughter (6:9).

In 20:4, this is again stressed; these souls have been *beheaded*⁸³ because of their testimony for Christ and because of the word of God. It is important to note that the *cause* of the death of the saints (6:9; 20:4) namely the testimony for Jesus and the word of God is ironically one of the *means* through which they conquer (12:11). In the Apocalypse of John, the testimony of God's word and the massacre of the people of God are inseparable. The killings of the Church is strongly tied up to the witnessing of God's word.

The reason the Church does not shrink *from death* (θανάτου) cf. 2:10, is because they have transformed their death into victorious and therapeutic tools by the substance of the blood (αἷμα) which is the death of the slain Lamb (12:11). Hence, they conquered (ἐνίκησαν) the dragon by the blood of the Lamb. The motif of transforming what we see to be traumatic into something therapeutic and victorious is prevalent in Revelation. It is an aspect of John's intention for writing. Through this lens, the believer's death, which is called "our blood" (6:10) becomes something not to shrink from. The blood "αἷμα" of the slain Church (cf. 6:9) is no longer traumatic because of the true meaning of the blood "αἷμα" of the slain Lamb (cf. 12:11).⁸⁴

3.5.5. The slaughter of the Church and the blood of the slaughtered Lamb.

The blood of the slaughtered Lamb has positive impacts on the slaughtered Church. On the one hand, when the Lamb is slain, his blood is transformed into (1) the very *price* for the purchasing of his followers (5:9), (2), the *means* through which the slain Church is redeemed (blood of the Lamb) (Rev 5:9), (3), is at the same time the means through which the redeemed ones conquer the great dragon, *the accuser of our brothers*, the Devil (12:11), and (4) the blood of the Lamb becomes the means through which the righteous acts of the Church are washed and made clean and white (7:14).

⁸³ This is a cognate of σφάζω

⁸⁴ "...the anthropological significance of blood is semantically well represented by rendering αἷμα as 'death'. In such a way 'death' is a figurative extension of the meaning of αἷμα" (Louw, 1982:10)

When the Church is slain, her blood becomes the rationale for her cry for justice (6:10). Interestingly, the white robes given to the martyrs (6:10) are described as white because they have been washed not in their blood but the blood of the Lamb (7:14). The immediate response to the cry of the *slain Church* for justice over their *blood* was a gift of white robes washed in the *blood* of the slain Lamb (6:10 cf. 7:14). The white dresses are the righteous acts of God's holy people (19:8). The righteous deeds include the witnessing of God's word and the *death* "our blood" which comes as a result of that.

Hence, the brothers and sisters who had been slain, are encouraged to view their blood through the lens of blood of the Lamb. Their death is no longer something they should mourn, but embrace and expect, "Then they were each given a white robe and *told to rest a little longer until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been*" 6:11 [my italics].⁸⁵ That *being slain* is an integral part of the believer's identity since it is included in the righteous acts of God's holy people. Finamore (2009:138) is right as he argues that

"the text certainly encourages its hearers to anticipate persecution and to be prepared to face martyrdom as Jesus did." He goes on to point out that "it is possible that the veneration of martyrs in the early church may be encouraged by the reading of Revelation," (2009:138).⁸⁶

In telling the story of Christ (Christology) in Revelation, John does not avoid nor exclude the fact that he is the Lamb who was slain. The same applies to the narrative, which Revelation tells about the Church (ecclesiology). In Revelation, the Church cannot conceive of herself without these traumatic experiences described in 6:4, 9; 18:24, even if she tries to exclude them (cf. Ganzevoort, 2008:5).

It is for this very reason, the Church of Smyrna amid her suffering is urged to be faithful *even to the point of death* (3:10).⁸⁷ They should not be afraid of sufferings. They should expect them instead (3:10). The traumatising of the Church is

⁸⁵ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Re 6:11). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

⁸⁶ Cf. the footnotes number 33 on this in Finamore (2009:138).

⁸⁷ "The nonviolent resistance of the slain but victorious Lamb is paradigmatic for believers' own response to evil" (Siebeck, 2003:108).

therefore not alien and should not be resisted, but is instead a turning point in the life course of the community of believers that should be accepted and embraced.

Hence, in this context, the response which was given to the cry of martyrs in 6:11 does not connote any form of resistance either violently nor non-violently but the connotation of acceptance.⁸⁸ It does not imply that the community of believers must rejoice in these malicious events of slaughtering, rather should acknowledge these events of being slain as essential within the life course in which they define their identity (cf. Ganzevoort, 2008:5). Jesus and his followers are who they are in Revelation, partly because of what they suffered. As an identity marker, the fact of 'being slaughtered' has value for the followers of the Lamb. This is true because it results from their faithful holding to the testimony of Jesus. Hence, on the one hand, the followers of Christ 'accept' their traumatization as the consequence of a positive and worthwhile commitment. They 'resist,' on the other hand, the seductions, threats and violence of Babylon and hold on to that testimony, on the other hand, unlike the many (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη) who have been led astray (ἐπλανήθησαν) (see 18:23).

The Church of Revelation does not take delight in their killing. This is clear in the martyrs' cry for justice, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth"⁸⁹ (6:10)? This is a lament and cry for retribution. This shows how malicious and wicked was the event which happened to them. However, the response to their call of vengeance (6:10), helps them to have a different attitude, namely taking the malicious events which happen to them not so much as aliens and intruders to their life, but as part of their life course and that they are called to attribute meanings to them (cf. Ganzevoort, 2008:5). These meanings are the ones which John wants his readers to grasp and incorporate into their framework of understanding and explaining their realities.

⁸⁸ Siebeck (2003:108) rightly points out that "As well, Johns' argument sometimes needs further support. For example, except for citing Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza as a precedent (123, η 57), he does not defend deciding to translate the Greek term as "consistent resistance" instead of the usual "patient endurance." Also, at one point he implies that the disciples' safety is in view in Luke 10:3, whereas the real issue in this text is their danger (144). In his argument that "lamb" in the Septuagint "symbolizes defenceless vulnerability in the face of violent power" (148), it is hard to see how the "trembling submission" of Ps. 114: 4, 6 or the tender care of the shepherd in Isa. 40:11 (Aquila ms.) constitutes vulnerability in the face of 'violent power.'"

⁸⁹ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Re 6:10). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

No matter how cruel these events are, they define her identity as the community of faith and followers of the slain Lamb. These conclusions of accepting rather than resisting the atrocious events of their time are the opposite of Johns' as they are outlined in his book, *The Lamb Christology of the Apocalypse of John: An Investigation into Its Origins and Rhetorical Force*.⁹⁰

3.6. THE APOCALYPTICAL DIMENSION OF ΣΦΆΖΩ.

Finally, the lexeme σφάζω is applied once (1x) on the seaborne beast in its therionological dimension as it is stated that “καὶ μίαν ἐκ τῶν κεφαλῶν αὐτοῦ ὡς **ἐσφαγμένην** εἰς θάνατον, καὶ ἡ πληγὴ τοῦ θανάτου αὐτοῦ ἐθεραπεύθη. καὶ ἐθαυμάσθη ὅλη ἡ γῆ ὀπίσω τοῦ θηρίου” (13:3 cf. 13:12; 13:14). We find this in the fourth section of Revelation, i.e. 12–14 cf. 13:3. That the death-blow and healing of the beast's wound are related to Nero's suicide and the recovery of the Roman Empire has been noticed by many scholars (Bauckham, 1998: 433-37; Cf. Beale, 1999:687-694). The Revelation beast and the healing of its death-blow have much to do with the tradition of the *Nero redivivus*. Yet, as pointed out by Bauckham (1998:437), Nero's return legend does not control John's thinking and perception of his world. It has, however, dramatically been changed and adapted by John to meet his purpose. For instance, referring to 13:3, Bauckham (1998:433) holds that

John's divergence from the Nero legend as it was current in his time, referring to the Nero mortal wound and recovery instead of an escape from death, serves his purpose of portraying the beast's claim to divinity as the parody of Christ's death and resurrection [my italics].

Expanding on this theme of the beast as the parody of Christ, Bauckham (1998:434) indicates that the death and resurrection idea is “central parallel between Christ and the beast in chapter 13, but other parallels follow from it.” Elaborating on these parallels he (1998:434) points out that “the universal worship of the beast (13:4, 8), following the portrayal of his head as ὡς ἐσφαγμένην (13:3), parallels the universal worship of the Lamb (5:8-14), following his portrayal as ὡς ἐσφαγμένην (5:6). That

⁹⁰ Cf. the section on Christological Approach Informs the Ecclesiological

the dragon gives the beast power, throne and authority (13:2) parallel the Father's gift of authority and a place on his throne to Christ (2:28; 3:21)."⁹¹

Further, observing on the use of ὥς in both 5:6 on the Lamb and in 13:5 on the beast, Bauckham (1998:432) fairly contends that "it is clearly intended to create a parallel between Christ's death and resurrection, on the one hand, and the beast's mortal wound and healing, on the other." He continues that

[s]ince the use of ὥς does not imply that the Lamb seemed only to have died but not really, its use in the same phrase in 13:3 cannot mean that the beast's head only appeared to be mortally wounded. The use of ὥς is a feature of John's visionary style (though not elsewhere used with participle: cf. 4:6; 8:8; 9:7; 15:2; 19:6) which may here indicate that neither the Lamb nor the beast is actually dead when John sees it in his vision because it has already come back to life again.

It is striking as Bauckham (1998:432) observes that "in 13:14 the beast's resurrection is described in terms which allude to Christ's (ἐξήσεν), but his death is described in terms which distinguish it from the Christ's ('had been wounded by the sword'). This is significant because "by this means, John is able to suggest that the beast's death and resurrection are and are not like Christ's. In other words, they are a deceitful imitation," argues Bauckham (1998:432).

Based on the preceding, we argue that the use of the lexeme σφάζω in Revelation is peculiar to John. It is used mainly to show one of the critical aspects of the identity of Christ and his followers—suffering and death, which has a traumatic connotation. It is not and has never been the beast's identity. The beast with its false character, which somewhat portrays its death as that of Christ's and his followers is a false Christ. The words of Jesus in Matt. 24:4, 5 "See that no one leads you astray. For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will lead many astray,"⁹² could also apply to the Revelation beast. One way of coming in Christ's name and claiming that "I am Christ" is by describing its death in terms close to that

⁹¹ For further reading on the parallels between the beast and Christ in chs. 13 & 17, see Bauckham (1998:431-441).

⁹² *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Mtt. 24:4-5). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

of Christ's death. This is what John is doing by describing the death-blow with the lexeme σφάζω, which best describes the identity of the Lamb and his followers.

The Lamb was slain, yet he is alive. He is followed by the slain community, which is persecuted and killed by the slain beast. This beast was slain yet active, and it is supported by the earth-dwellers. As the community of believers, the redeemed from the earth are being protected as they preach (prophecy) the gospel for 1260 days (11:6; 12:6), the beast and its followers are at the same time busy ruling and trampling for 42 months (11:2). As pointed out in our methodology, this study would agree with Brooks (1990:124) that the seaborne beast is "Satan's persecuting power which is constantly at work in history through governments, rulers, totalitarian states, dictators and atheistic regimes of one kind or another."

Commenting on the suffering of the community of believers under Nero, Bauckham (1998:411) points out that "[h]is [Nero's] persecution, though confined to the city of Rome was a traumatic experience for the whole Church, it seems, not least because Paul and Peter were martyred during it." In John's theology, σφάζω is a keyword he uses explicitly to denote what not only happened to but identifies significantly with the righteous people, Christ and the Church. Remarkably, the same applies to the way John uses it on the seaborne beast. The whole point is to underscore that though the seaborne monster appears to be Christ-like in its death, "resurrection" and universal worship which follows, it is a false Christ.

Holding that the beast is the symbol of Satan himself rather than any Roman emperor, Kistemaker (2007:379) argues that "[w]ith this description of Satan, John delineates a parody of the death and resurrection of Jesus, whose place the beast wants to usurp." The parody of the beast mimicking Christ in Revelation is striking. Like Christ in 5:6, one of the beast's heads also dies and resurrects. We see this in John's symbolic way of saying "One of its heads seemed to have a mortal wound, but its mortal wound was healed" (13:5).⁹³ The death blow and its healing mean the death and resurrection of the beast. The point here is that

while particular governments and enemies of true Christianity will come and go, rise and fall, the underlying principle of Christ versus

⁹³ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Rev. 13:3). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

Satan, world authorities versus Christ's authority, the true Church versus the states, continues all the time throughout the gospel age, i.e. 42 months (Brooks, 1990:125).

3.7. THE LEXEME ΣΦΑΖΩ AND THE SOCIO-HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF REVELATION.

The New Testament epistles were occasional letters, predominantly written where there was a significant occasion that prompted a writer to write to his audience. Revelation is no exception. Hence, as already stated in our first chapter of this study, like any other book of the Bible, Revelation was not written in a vacuum. It was instead written for a targeted audience living at a particular time and place, within specific socio-historical and cultural contexts, for a specific purpose.

Having stated that it is noteworthy to start by pointing out that historically, it is documented that in 64 AD with Nero as the Roman Emperor, Rome had sustained a severe fire (Satre, 1984:63). Using Christians as scapegoats, Nero blamed them for starting that fire in the metropolis. However, many historians believe the rumour that Nero had started it to make way for his building plans. When the rumour would not die, the emperor fixed the blame on Christians, who were then in large numbers *burned, crucified, and torn by animals and killed*" (Satre, 1984:63) [italics mine]. This historical background is essential in our understanding and interpretation of the Apocalypse of John.

Hence, the intense Neronian persecution which led to the deaths of many Christians in the latter part of the first-century was at the back of John's mind and his contemporary audience when Revelation was written to the Asian churches. Beckwith (1967:204) highlights that "it was in the reign of the infamous Domitian (81-96) that more active persecution was again instituted."

Though many scholars have argued that there was no general persecution by the time of John, under Domitian, the anti-Christian persecution was never entirely out of the picture.⁹⁴ Satre (1984:64) rightly points out that "[a]lthough there is no hard evidence of a *general* persecution of Christians during Domitian's reign, there was,

⁹⁴ On this, Beckwith (1967: 205) points out that "Domitian's persecution did not consist in the wholesale slaughter and the atrocities instituted by Nero; deaths were evidently inflicted in different parts of the empire, but apparently other penalties, banishment, imprisonment and confiscation of property, etc., were more usual."

varying from place to place, local persecution of which John himself and Antipas (2:13) were very likely victims (cf. also 2:10)” [italics original].

Besides, a careful reading of Revelation shows that it is likely that John foresaw that the extreme but local anti-Christian persecution of his time would at some stage turn into intense general persecution of all Christians in all the provinces of the Roman Empire. The suffering and sporadic killings of Christians at the time of Emperor Domitian, who succeeded his brother Titus in AD 81 was neither imagined nor an illusion. This anti-Christian persecution was not metaphorical, but real. Therefore, unless you have the persecution and killing of Christians at the forefront of your mind, you will never make good sense of the book of Revelation. This is true because “[t]he events between 64 and Domitian’s reign, especially the Neronian persecution and the destruction of Jerusalem, were stamped ineradicably into the consciousness of Christians” (Satre, 1984:64).

Historically, in the first three centuries, the Roman Empire was indeed known as the persecuting power of Christians. They singled the latter out for many wrong reasons and became victims of all kinds of atrocities. As already pointed out, their persecution and execution took various forms, including burning and crucifying. Crucifixion was the worst of any punishment one could receive under Roman law. Many Christians were torn by savage beasts. It is more likely that John uses the lexeme σφάζω to denote the traumatic and atrocious killings of Christians by the Roman political powers of the day. For John, the lexeme σφάζω is the right term to depict the murder of the righteous people by the wicked. This is the case because the sentiments behind all kinds of deaths through which Christians underwent could best be shown in what connotes the lexeme σφάζω.

Many people died in the four-year bloody Jewish war (66–70 AD). However, what John has in view in his use of the lexeme σφάζω in Revelation is especially the holocaust of Christians for the sake of being Christians and for holding the testimony of Jesus. For John, the Christian church on earth is best identified with the atrocious and wicked persecution, which often led to their death. This is a fundamental aspect of who they are by following the Saviour to whom the most atrocious slaughter has ever been done. We pointed out in the previous chapter that “with notable frequency,

Josephus' uses σφάζω and ἀποσφάπτω for the grisly and mostly *illegal slaying of men*" (Tübingen, 1971:933) [my italics].

For John, the most unjust and horrible execution of a human being, which has ever occurred in history happened to Christ, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate (11:8). This even includes all the wrongful deaths and malicious massacres (burned, crucified and torn by ferocious animals) of Christians by Rome. Also, Josephus used this lexeme σφάζω in most cases to depict the massacring and butchering of a defenceless population (Ant., 3:226, 237, 242, cf. also 3.206).

Josephus' usage of the lexeme includes animal ritual sacrifices, like in the LXX he uses σφάζω (also σφάπτω) to depict a brutal and traumatic killing of a large group of humans. Unlike the LXX, Josephus uses the lexeme to denote an illegal execution of men who in most cases are defenceless. Ewing (1990:72) has a point as he writes that "[t]he phrase 'thou wast slain' (*esphages*, Rev. 5:6, 9) certainly refers to the crucifixion. However, the word is most commonly used concerning a violent slaughter by a weapon like a sword and not to a *legal execution*" [my italics]. Thus, the death of Christ and his followers is in that sense not merely unfair; it is illegal. Looking at all the connotations of the lexeme σφάζω in the first century, John believes that the lexeme best describes what happened to Christ and his followers.

That Neronian persecution was unjust and illegal and that Christians were defenceless (unarmed) best justify John's use of the lexeme σφάζω only given to describe Christ's death and that of his followers. In Revelation, Christians are persecuted because of their testimony of Jesus. The Roman persecution power is the beast of John's day. The lexeme applies within it to depict a false Christ (13:3). The ecclesiological dimension of σφάζω in Revelation has a genocidal connotation (6:4; 9). The Christological dimension of the term has a ceremonial and sacrificial undertone (5:6, 8).

3.8. CHRISTOLOGICAL APPROACH OF ΣΦΑΖΩ INFORMS THE ECCLESIOLOGICAL.

That what happens to the Lamb happens to his followers as well cannot go unnoticed in Revelation. The Lamb is a faithful witness, and so are his followers. The Lamb is slain, and so are his followers. John describes the Church as "... all who have been *slain* on the earth" in 18:24 because they are the followers of the Lamb

who was slain (5:6). Though this has already been established and showed in the preceding section, the following is a way of bringing the whole point home.

Elaborating on one aspect of the Apocalypse's rhetorical force, i.e. the integral link between its Lamb Christology and ethics, Johns' thesis summarised by Siebeck, (2003:107) is that "by his faithful witness unto death, Jesus, the slaughtered lamb, *conquered evil and thereby became a model for first-century believers' own nonviolent resistance to evil*" [my italics]. We cannot ignore Johns' connection between the Lamb Christology and ethics. This connection is a central piece in John's theological agenda—Christology informs ecclesiology in Revelation. Further, that the Lamb is presented as *slain at the centre of the throne* appeals to an ethical response from the readers amidst suffering. Thus, Johns argues for *nonviolent resistance* as a model which the readers had to mimic from Christ in his metaphorical portrait as the slain Lamb.⁹⁵ Royalty (2005:572) who is not convinced by Johns' thesis points out that

Johns writes within the Mennonite tradition of nonviolent resistance. While the resistance of domination and empire is a theme of the Apocalypse, he is swimming against the tide in arguing that the theology of the book is nonviolent; the imagery of destruction in the book from heaven alone is overwhelming.

Observably, violent and non-violent resistances concerning any traumatic event are mostly natural human responses. These responses [violent and non-violent resistances] are always taken as the obvious option when the traumatic event that has occurred on people is treated as alien and as a menace to their identity and integrity. This researcher somewhat neither side with Johns nor with Royalty. It is worth pointing out that Johns' thesis as she advocates for non-violent resistance in Revelation is legitimately plausible. This is the case only in as far as the *spiritual crisis*, i.e. the imperial cult (the Roman idolatrous seductions) is considered as a factor in the social setting of Revelation.

⁹⁵ Commenting on Johns' ideas, Royalty (2005:573) indicates that "he repeats his tendentious thesis that John of Patmos was, essentially, a Mennonite Christian who developed "an ethic of *faithful, nonviolent resistance*" (his emphasis). This faithful resistance will lead to the Christians' being slaughtered like the Lamb, so Johns returns to the OT to understand further the model for the Lamb Christology."

Johns (2003:127) objectively points out that “the resolution of that spiritual crisis would ironically induce a very real *social* crisis as the church began faithfully to resist the imperial cult and to face the consequences of their allegiance to Christ” [her emphasis]. On the one hand, as Johns argues, a faithful and non-violent resistance is John’s reader’s right ethical response in the face of the spiritual crisis. This researcher contends that acceptance is the response advocated by John in Revelation in as far as the social crisis which led to the persecution and martyrdom of some Christians is concerned.

As this researcher has already demonstrated, the leading ethical response intended in the portrayal of the Lamb as slain is neither violent nor non-violent resistance but *acceptance*.⁹⁶ To put this differently, we would argue that the Lamb’s imagery coupled with the whole idea of being slain, at least in Revelation, is likely meant to call the readers to an entirely different attitude and response toward their traumatic events—*acceptance* rather than resistance. Here, this traumatised should, therefore, be treated not as alien to the identity of God’s people but as an integral part of their identity as *the followers of the Lamb wherever he goes rather than foreign and a threat to their character*.

These traumatic experiences define who Revelation’s readers are in Christ. Being “slain” as connoted by the lexeme σφάζω is a sign of being a follower of the slain Lamb, just as it is for the Lamb himself. No matter how evil and atrocious their experiences might have been, John’s readers could not accurately define themselves and their true identity without those experiences. They were who they were, the followers of the Lamb because of the traumata they have suffered (cf. Ganzevoort, 2008:5).

On the applicability of σφάζω concerning the killing of a human being, the Old Testament (LXX) uses it to denote an atrocious but *deserved punishment to a large group* of people. Looking at the quality of a human victim, the LXX uses it on the wicked and evil people. Whereas, concerning the quantity, they use it in the

⁹⁶ Royalty (2005:573) “Faithful resistance led the Lamb to death—and so to triumph. And so, it will be for the Christians of Asia if they resist (not fight) Rome and its cults. But in a section that is by rights an entire seventh chapter, “Christology and Ethics in the Apocalypse” (pp. 171-202), Johns considers how this Lamb theology fits (or better, doesn’t fit) with the incredible violence in the Apocalypse and, more significantly, with its interpretation over the past two thousand years. He must admit that, if the vision of the Apocalypse is ultimately ethical and nonviolent, it has not been very successful (p. 186). Given the imagery and tradition of interpretation, perhaps rather it is John who has the vision wrong.”

immense majority of them to connote a genocidal violent death, the demise of the masses. In the Johannine writings, σφάζω is, however, used in an opposite way both in as far as the quality, and the quantity of the victim is concerned, particularly having Christ in view. It is Christ, who undeservingly dies the death of the immense majority of evil people. He then marks a precedent and the paradigm for his followers, the community of believers.

John states the triumph of the Lamb through his slaughtering and he also mentions the result of that victory—the purchasing of “people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation” (Rev. 5:9).⁹⁷ The three (3) resulting blessings of the death of the Lamb epitomised by the concept of blood are incredible—the purchase of persons for God, then making them be a priestly kingdom to serve God while also making them eligible to reign on earth. Contrary to Finamore’s submission and Girardian theories, these effects are more beneficial than revelatory.

The death of Christ has achieved far much more than just what Finamore and Girard argue for as revealing the non-violence of God and the violence of human cultures. Beside the forgiveness of sins and redemption of God’s people, the death of Christ has founded a kingdom community. Hence, what appears to be traumatic is loaded with victory and tremendous blessings for God’s people. The estimate that the Lamb was slain, and introduced should, therefore, be something the readers of John accept, welcome and adapt as part of who they are by sticking to the slain Lamb.

3.9. CONCLUSION.

The researcher has concluded that the lexeme σφάζω is central to John’s formulation of the Christology (doctrine of Christ), ecclesiology (doctrine of the church) and therionology (doctrine of the beast) of Revelation. In our survey, we have noticed that for John, the lexeme σφάζω is fitting to paint the *identity* of Christ and his followers. The four-time (4x) use of the lexeme in its application to the Lamb’s imagery (5:6, 9, 13, 13:8) is enough to convince the reader always to have that in mind whenever the symbolism of the Lamb appears about Jesus in Revelation.

⁹⁷ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Rev. 5:9). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

Using the lexeme σφάζω on the beast of Revelation (13:3) is ironic to depict it as the parody of the Lamb. In Revelation, the definition of Christ's identity and his role in the cosmos cannot be fully realised without the fundamental piece of Jesus' identity as the slain Lamb. Revelation uses the lexeme σφάζω to describe particularly the persecution of Christians, which in most cases leads to their horrible deaths. The lexeme σφάζω applies to Jesus not only to highlight his identity but also to inspire courage, tenacity and endurance through any sorts of suffering Christians may undergo. The Jesus of Revelation is the slain Lamb (5:6, 8, 12) who is always followed by a slain community of believers (6:4, 9) which is ironically persecuted by a slain beast (13:3).

John's selection of this lexeme to paint the cruel death of Christ is informed by the Levitical use of the term in the LXX. In this, John explains the benefits generated from the death of Christ—the purchase of a community and the establishment of God's kingdom. Using the lexeme σφάζω in Revelation is the opposite of its use in the Old Testament corpus, particularly as it applies to human killing. In its application to human killings, the LXX uses it to depict the massacre of a large group of people with a connotation of the judgment from God. The lexeme σφάζω depicts the cruel and atrocious killing of wicked people. Unlike the LXX, John's use of the lexeme is to paint the death of the Lord Jesus for salvific purposes and the massacre of his followers. John's use of the lexeme matches its function in the Psalms. The lexeme σφάζω has, therefore, a connotation that *identifies* well Jesus Christ and his followers. John uses it on the beast because they portray the creature as the false Christ in Revelation. In John's day, the lexeme σφάζω was mostly used to imply an illegal genocidal killing of a powerless population.

Notwithstanding, for John, it is what happened to Christ and what continues to happen to Christ's followers that incorporate all that the lexeme connotes. Unless we bring in the lexeme σφάζω and its connotation, we cannot define who Christ is and who Christians are by following the slain Lamb. The traumatising which underscores the use of the lexeme σφάζω has dramatically been transformed into a tool of comfort in Revelation.

CHAPTER 4: HOW THE LEXEME ΣΦΆΖΩ FITS INTO REVELATION'S DEPICTION OF JESUS (CHRISTOLOGICAL DIMENSION)

4.1. INTRODUCTION.

The previous chapter focuses on the study of the occurrence of the lexeme σφάζω in Revelation. In that, this researcher has identified how the term fits Jesus (Christological dimension), the community of believers (ecclesiological aspect), and the seaborne beast (therionological dimension)⁹⁸ and how this, ties to the social-historical context of Revelation. In that chapter, the researcher has also looked at the critical part the lexeme σφάζω plays in the redeeming work of Christ and how it informs and changes the Christian view of suffering (Christological approach informs the ecclesiological).

The current chapter will examine how the lexeme σφάζω fits into Revelation's portrayal of Jesus (Christology). This is not the place for a significant outlay of the Christology of Revelation. This has been dramatically and well documented in depth by many New Testament scholars (cf. Bauckham, 1993). However, the researcher's concern in this chapter is to investigate the unique place John has crafted for the whole concept of slaughtering, particularly the role of the lexeme σφάζω within Revelation's Christology. It will also analyse the significance of the Christological dimension of the lexeme σφάζω in suffering. To show this, this chapter will outlay some different outlooks of who Jesus is (Christology) in Revelation and see how the portrayal of Jesus as the slain Lamb depicted in the role of the lexeme σφάζω fits into those fundamental aspects of Christ.

4.2. THE OVERALL CHRISTOLOGICAL CONCERNS IN REVELATION.

A careful analysis of Revelation will then notice that the Johannine Christology in as far as they bring it out in Revelation about Jesus' humanity, does focus predominantly on the fact that Jesus is the long-awaited king of God's people. The Revelation highlights several roles that Jesus plays, but the most fundamental function of Christ in Revelation is that of the king to establish God's kingdom (cf.

⁹⁸ From therion = beast and logos = study of (the study of the beast)

Bauckham, 1993:67). For this reason, Revelation emphatically addresses Jesus with many and different kingship designations. Revelation addresses Jesus in terms and titles pregnant with his kingship together with messianic connotations, at least in as far as Jesus's human identity is concerned.

To show the pre-eminence of Christ as the central character in the book of Revelation, Hand (2012:102) lists about thirty-five titles, which were given to him in the book. Now a close look of the record shows that about ten of those titles have kingship undertones (Christ, king of kings, king of saints, Lion of the tribe of Judah, holder of the key of David, Root of David, Prince of the king of the earth, Son of God, Son of man). Hand (2012:102) writes that "[t]he depth and frequency of Christological titles creates the strong impression that Christ is the central figure. He is preeminent. No other person or being comes close. Even comparing the titles for God, the Father, the Holy Spirit, Satan, and Antichrist to those used of Christ shows this strong emphasis on Christ's centrality."

If Jesus is that long-awaited king of the Davidic line, how *best* does he fulfil the messianic hopes as the king of God's people? This question is central to John's choice of the Lamb imagery, especially in the depiction of the Lamb as though slain (ἐσφαγμένον). We will demonstrate that the Lamb imagery is John's most vital piece and his solution to the puzzle of the book, particularly in how the Messianic hopes are realised. Further, that the Lamb was slain is the central aspect of both Jesus' mission and his identity. For that reason, this chapter aims to show that whoever Jesus is and whatever he does in the record of Revelation is well explained and seen through the lens of the slaughtered Lamb imagery. The part that is lacking in all the appellations of the Davidic Messiah in Jewish expectation in as far as his humanity is concerned can be found in Jesus' depiction as the slain Lamb.

Ironically, as the king, Jesus establishes God's kingdom through his death (Bauckham, 1993:67). For this reason, John's original readers could not miss the fact that the Messiah they are introduced to is the one who was once *pierced* (1:7); once *slain* (5:6, 9, 15; 13:8) and once *crucified* (11:8).⁹⁹ The italics define the

⁹⁹ The crucifixion is the worst thing ever done to the Holy Son of God. For further reading on this horrible act and the suffering of the church see Moltmann (1974) in *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ As the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology* and (1979) in *Hope for The Church: Moltmann In Dialogue with Practical Theology*.

humanity of the Messiah of Revelation and the centrality of his death in the book. In his humanity, Jesus experienced death. His death left the marks that will always be identified with him—looking as though slaughtered “ἔσφαγγμένον” (5:6).

They portray the Jesus of the Apocalypse of John as both divine and human, i.e. he is equally God and man. Touching on his deity, Jesus shares the same titles and calls to worship with God the Father. The worship of Jesus is therefore not an invention of later centuries by church fathers but is instead a New Testament theology. Claims such as Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last... describe well both God the Father and the Jesus of Revelation (1:8, 17; 2:8; 21:6; 22:13).

Looking at the person of Christ, Bauckham focuses on these titles, which both God the Father and Jesus the Son of God share in Revelation to elaborate on the essential nature of Christ—he is God. He argues that these designations have nothing to do with so-called adoptionism. Jesus did not become the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End because of his resurrection and glorification. Yet, these appellations describe who Jesus has always been in his essential being as God (1993:54-58). He rightly says that “these titles he [Jesus] shares with God shows that he shared the eternal being of God from before the creation” (1993:58). Talking about the prominence of Jesus Christ in Revelation based on how he is described, Hand (2012:104) points out that “several of the titles of Christ connect Him directly with God in the Old Testament.”

A careful study of Revelation will agree that Christ’s humanity and divinity overlap so much that it is hard to detach them. The same applies to the person and work of Christ. These two are intertwined although for doctrine’s sake, we turn to distinguish them (cf. Bauckham 1993:54). At the core of the depiction of Jesus’ humanity in Revelation is the fundamental idea that Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah. The Messianic hopes as they are introduced and presented in the Old Testament corpus and some rabbinic writings are also present in the depiction of the Jesus of Revelation with some surprising and unexpected ingredients as it will soon be elaborated.

Coming to his humanity and with the emphasis on his kingship, they present the Jesus of Revelation as the *Christ*, (ὁ Χριστός) (1:1, 2, 5; 11:15; 12:10, 20:4), the *Son*

of man, (ὄμοιον υἰὸν ἀνθρώπου) (1:13; 14:14), the *Son of God*, (ὁ υἱὸς θεοῦ) (2:18), the *Root and the Progeny of David* (ἡ ρίζα καὶ τὸ γένος Δαυίδ) (5:5; 22:16), the *Ruler of the kings of the earth and of God's creation* (ὁ ἀρχῶν τῶν βασιλέων τῆς γῆς) (1:5; 3:14; 17:14; 19:14, 15) etc. All these messianic appellations are tied up and enriched in meaning and importance by *the* critical piece of Revelation's Christology—*the Lamb who was slain* (5:6, 9, 12; 13:8). If the title *son of man* is Jesus' most favourite in the Gospels, the Lamb, or to be specific, the Lamb who was slaughtered is, however, the running title and imagery of the long-awaited king in the Apocalypse of John.

Christ is the Lamb, primarily because of the role of establishing God's kingdom through his death. His death as denoted in the lexeme σφάζω is central to everything we know about him in Revelation. Jesus' death is the most startling piece of the Christology of the New Testament, and particularly of Revelation. It stands out as a big shock to all the Jewish hopes which were firmly rooted in their hearts in anticipation of the coming Messiah. McDonald (1996:30) rightly puts it that "[t]he Christian understanding of how God works runs counter to almost all of our human instincts, which is why New Testament writers are trying hard (against the odds) to hold on to the central insight of the crucified Christ."

4.3. THE SLAIN LAMB IS THE CHRIST.

The Slaughtered Lamb is introduced as the Christ in Revelation (1:1, 2). As Christ, Jesus is the man and the king of God's people who accomplishes his mission of establishing God's kingdom through death as the slain Lamb. This title [Christ] has much to do with Jesus as being the King and the establishment of his kingdom.

Though "Son of Man" is the central portrait of Jesus in John's inaugural vision (1:9-20), Christ [the Messiah] is, however, the very first title given to Jesus in Revelation— "the revelation of Jesus *Christ*, the testimony of Jesus *Christ*, grace and peace... from Jesus *Christ*" (1:1, 2, 5) [my italics]. Christ is not his surname but his title. In this introduction, the messiahship (kingship) of Jesus is certainly highlighted. Although Jesus is declared as the Christ (*Mashiah*) in Revelation, it rarely follows that he is God. It is not an assumption we can make here. John does, however, believe that Jesus is God as we have previously discussed. In Revelation,

John's first portrayal of Jesus as the Christ is to mean that as fully human, he is the Messiah, i.e. the anointed King of God's people (cf. Ps. 2).

4.3.1. The Christ and his established kingdom.

It is clear from the Old Testament texts and as pointed out by Pomykala (2010:938) that priests and prophets were also somewhat known as "anointed ones" (messiahs). Yet, Glustrom (1994:195) rightly points out that "the Bible frequently uses the term messiah when referring to kings: Saul, David, Zedekiah; even the pagan King Cyrus of Persia is designated as Messiah." But over time the title "God's anointed," "God's Messiah" or "Mashiah" came to be associated and reserved more largely and only with the kingly office, and particularly with the future king from the Davidic line who will fulfil God's promises as he will rule God's people (cf. 2 Sm. 7: 14-15; Ps. 2). Koester (2001:77) writes that the "[m]essianic expectations were shaped by memories of King David, who came from the tribe of Judah." This agrees with Glustrom (1994:195) as he shows that "later, however, Messiah is identified primarily with King David, who represents the ideal ruler."

It is consequently from there the messianic expectation sprung out so firmly. Again, Glustrom (1994:94) points out that "[f]rom this developed a belief that an unusual person endowed with unique gifts of spirituality and wisdom will spring forth from the house of David."

For this reason, in Revelation, we do not divorce the kingdom concept from the fact that the man Jesus is the Messiah, i.e. the king of that kingdom. This is true, as already said because as time went by the title Christ came to mean the Messianic and Davidic king in the Jewish mind. In the Apocalypse, this unique king is Jesus.

As a result, in Revelation, seven times (7x)¹⁰⁰ Jesus is explicitly assigned the title as the Christ, the Messiah and fourteen times (14x),¹⁰¹ the writer refers to Jesus Christ or Christ by using personal or possessive pronouns (him, his, etc.) and describes Jesus Christ otherwise—the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead and the ruler of the kings of the earth. In Revelation, they always connect Christ to his kingdom. There is nowhere we can rightly talk about a king without referring to his kingdom.

¹⁰⁰ 1:1, 2, 5; 11:15; 12:10; 20:4, 6

¹⁰¹ 1:1 (5x), 5 (5x), 6 (2x), 7 (4x)

King and Kingdom go hand in hand. For instance, in Revelation, it is Jesus Christ or Jesus the King, who has made us “a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth” (5:9).¹⁰² This is what you would expect any king to do—establishing a kingdom and ruling over it. Bauckham (1993:67) rightly points out that “the role of Christ in Revelation is to establish God’s kingdom on earth: in the words of 11:15, to turn the ‘kingdom of the world’ (currently ruled by evil) into the kingdom of our Lord and his Messiah.”

Further, Revelation points out that the *kingdom of the world* has become the kingdom of our Lord and his appointed king, the Christ (11:15). God’s appointed king will reign in this kingdom that will become his forever (11:15). It is, therefore, clear here that the King and his Kingdom are inseparable.

Talking of Rev. 11, we should note that it is the closing chapter of the third section (8-11) of the book. Each section of the book describes events which take place in the *gospel age* but each from a different angle. This section [8-11] expands on the plagues, which befall the enemies of God’s people, during the interim time before the second coming of Christ. They describe the plagues as *trumpets* for they serve as warnings to the earth-dwellers (cf. Hendriksen, 2007:115-133). The earth-dwellers are defined as *those who destroy the earth* at the end of this section (11:18). They are both earth-dwellers and earth-destroyers.

The gospel age spans from the first to the second coming of Christ. Thus, at the sound of the seventh trumpet, we are already brought to the end of the age. For it is at the end of the era when the kingdom of the world will become the kingdom of the Lord and his Messiah in a more absolute and definite sense (11:15). For, unless evil is thoroughly dealt with and eradicated and evildoers are utterly destroyed, we cannot claim the Lord’s and his Messiah’s absolute possession and control of the kingdom of the world.

It is after this historical period when the anger of the Lord God Almighty will fully be displayed as He judges the dead and rewards His servants, the prophets. This time, he will destroy the earth-dwellers who destroy the earth (11:17, 18). Hence, in this interim period, we can see that God has not yet taken up his great power nor begun to reign in an absolute way with the total submission of everything under his feet (cf.

¹⁰² *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Rev. 5:10). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

11:17). The wrath of God and the time to judge the dead has not yet come (cf. 2 Tim. 4:1). The time for rewarding the community of believers has not yet come (cf. 11:18). These events will definitely and surely all take place only at the end of the age. It is only then one would join the heavenly voices loudly and say that “[t]he kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever”¹⁰³ (11:15). Many important things have to take place before the kingdom of the world finally becomes unequivocally the kingdom of God and his Christ. There is an appointed time when this will become a reality.

In the Gospels, one offer of the devil at the beginning of Christ’s ministry is to give him all *the kingdoms of the world* in exchange for worship (Matt. 4:8; Lk. 4:5). Interestingly, this temptation occurs immediately after God commissions Jesus as the king of God’s kingdom through John’s baptism. However, Rev. 11:15 shows that according to God’s wise program, certain things have to occur before we finally say the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of God and his Messiah. Shockingly, the most significant of those things is the death of the king of that kingdom.

In the Gospels (Matt. 4; Lk. 4), the devil tempted Jesus by compelling him to fall before him and worship him. This is all that he wanted from Jesus, nothing but *worship*. Interestingly, the tempter promised to make Jesus king of the kingdoms of the world in return by avoiding death. Ironically, in Revelation, the worship of Christ and his kingship over the kingdom of the world are grounded in nothing but his death. We read about the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders falling before the Lamb and worshipping him. The fundamental basis for that worship is because they slaughtered the Lamb (Rev. 5). Hence, what the devil needed from Jesus [worship], Jesus got it from the entire creation based on his death.

4.3.2. The “already” and “not yet” of Christ’s kingdom.

For the aforementioned reason, in John’s mind and like in many other New Testament writers’ reasoning, there is a sense in which the kingdom of the world is already God’s and Christ’s since the beginning of the gospel age and a sense in

¹⁰³ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Rev. 11:15). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

which it is yet to be theirs at the end of the gospel age when evil in every sense will be entirely eradicated and all creation will absolutely submit to its Creator. This truth is well pointed out and highlighted in the next section of the book [12-14]. Unlike Rev. 11, Rev. 12 marks the start of a new section, the fourth movement which returns us to the start of the gospel age. Interestingly, right at the beginning of the fourth section which describes *the beginning of the gospel age* through the Christ's event—his life, death and resurrection—we are told: “[n]ow have come the *salvation and the power and the kingdom of our Lord, and the authority of his Messiah*” (12:10) [my italics].

This resonates with the previous section which *ended with* the similar conclusion of this historical period, “*The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever*” (11:15)¹⁰⁴ [my italics]. At the start of the gospel age, the writer mentions of “the power” of the Lord (Rev. 12), but at the end of the period, he describes it as the *great power* τὴν δύναμιν σου τὴν μεγάλην” (Rev. 11). In Revelation, God's kingdom is ushered in force, and it will be consummated in great power.

So, the kingdom has already become the Lord's and His Messiah's in one sense, and yet it will be the Lord's and his Messiah's forever in another. That is the so-called “already” and “not yet” theology of the kingdom of God which is advocated by several scholars (Moore, 2004; Morphew, 1991; Ladd, 1974; Ladd, 1959). According to 12:10, Christ already has authority over the world in this interim period. Yet, there are several things which are not however in total submission to his power. The devil is still in operation. For we are told “... rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, *for the devil has come down to you in great wrath because he knows that his time is short!*” [my italics] (12:12).¹⁰⁵

Though at the start of this gospel age, the salvation, the power, the kingdom of God and the authority of his Messiah have become a reality (12:10), the devil is still given permission to attack the Church (the woman) in general, and in particular individual

¹⁰⁴ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Rev. 11:15). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

¹⁰⁵ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Rev. 12:12). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

believers i.e. “those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus”¹⁰⁶ (12:13-17) (cf. Hendriksen 2007:141-144).

Nevertheless, as already indicated above, Christ will take his *great power* “τὴν δύναμιν σου τὴν μεγάλην” (11:17) and begin to reign forever at the end of this historical period. The adjective “great” modifies the word “power” which Christ will take at the end of the age, contrasting it with the power [without the adjective great] that is said to be his at the beginning of the age in 12:10.

It is, again, at the end of the gospel age when the wrath of the nations will come, the judgment of the dead will occur. It is when God will reward his servants, the prophets. The Lord God Almighty will destroy those who destroy the earth (11:18). It is when the kingdom of the world will become God’s and that of his Christ, who will reign forever (11:15). Everything will, at this point, submit totally to Christ’s authority. There will be no evil. Therefore, in Revelation, the *salvation* of God’s people begins with the devil’s defeat, his hurling down (12:10) through the person and the work of Christ. This redemption will be fully completed with the display of God’s wrath by judging the dead and destroying those who destroy the earth (11:15-18).

Talking about the authority of God’s Messiah (12:10) right at the start of the gospel age brings comfort to any reader experiencing hardship or suffering. Therefore, by giving Jesus the title ‘Christ’ (the Messiah), John enables his readers to perceive that appellation in human and Davidic kingship categories. For John, Christ is a human king from the line of David to whom God has delegated the authority to establish a kingdom and govern his people. He is the vicegerent of God. He is the ideal man, the last Adam. He is God’s special representative on earth. He possesses all authority.

4.3.3. Christ and his way of establishing his kingdom.

Though the fact of delegating authority to Jesus as the king of God’s kingdom is exciting, the *means through* which all of this becomes a tangible reality is not stimulating, at least from a purely human perspective—to free his people from their sins, this king must die. He must pay the price with his blood (1:5). To build a kingdom and produce priests to serve God, this Messiah has to be pierced and

¹⁰⁶ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Rev. 12:17). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

crucified (1:7; 11:8). It is at this point where the metaphor of the slain Lamb portrayed in the use of the lexeme σφάζω fits in well with John's understanding of the Messiah. The Lamb depicted as though slain (ἔσφαγμένον) solves the whole puzzle of messianic expectations. John believes that the slaughtering of the Lamb is the piece which addresses how the messianic hopes are to be materialised.

In Revelation Christology, presenting Jesus as the slain Lamb using the lexeme σφάζω is not a disappointment; instead, it is the punchline in the narrative of Revelation. To achieve all that was expected from this long-awaited Christ, he has to be the slain lamb. Only then, this king will be able to build up a kingdom of a community freed from sins and prepared to serve God the father. This community must then accept and celebrate the powerful *means* through which they have been formed as a kingdom and priests. We already noted that at 11:15; the writer is referring to the consummation of God's kingdom at the end of the age. However, 1:5 & 12:10 refer to that decisive moment in history where the kingdom of God is launched through the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. Again, the Lamb, who was slain, but now is standing alive at the centre of God's throne, explains and gives meaning to all these events.

Revelation is the unveiling of Jesus, who is the Christ (the Messiah), the anointed King of God's people (1:1). Everything that John saw is the testimony of the Messiah, the anointed King of God's people, who is Jesus (1:1). That the future Messiah will be the king of all the kings of the earth (1:5) and that he will rule forever (11:15). These are familiar categories that exist both in the Old Testament and Rabbinic messianic hopes, except that, the Christ will be the firstborn from *the dead* (1:5), that he will be *pierced* (1:7) and that he will free his people from sins through *his own life as the sacrifice* (1:5b) were shocking and unbelievable in the Jewish categories of the future king.

However, this shocking reality is the startling *means through* which the Messiah of Revelation forms for himself, a kingdom that is community of people who are loved by him and are freed from sins (1:5b). John's understanding of Christ matches well with the Old Testament idea that the Messiah will be a human king.¹⁰⁷ That the Messiah will be a human king was never foreign in the Jewish mind and expectation

¹⁰⁷ (cf. the genealogy of Jesus in Matt 1).

of the Messiah. By claiming that Christ was to be the firstborn from the dead, the pierced one and the one who is the substitutionary and atoning sacrifice, John is showing the king of God's people to be fully human.

The Apostle's Creed says almost everything documented in John's opening doxology (1:4-8) about the Christ. First, the doxology introduces to his readers who Jesus is; the Christ, namely the long-awaited Messiah, the faithful witness and the King of all the kings of the earth (v. 5) [we believe in Jesus Christ, our Lord born of the Virgin Mary]. Second, it informs them about Christ's death, which was motivated by nothing but his love for his people, "to him who loves us" (v. 5). The concepts of "his blood" (v. 5) and that he was "pierced" (v. 7) refer to Jesus' sacrificial and substitutionary death [... was crucified under Pontius Pilate]. Third, the doxology shows what Christ's achieved through his death—freedom from sins and forming up a kingdom and priesthood with the sole purpose of *servicing his* [Christ's] God and the Father (v. 6). Fourth, it highlights the resurrection of Christ by pointing to the fact that he is the firstborn from the dead [... the third day he rose from the dead] (v. 5b). Fifth, it points out the hope of his return. He is coming with the clouds (v. 7). Finally, it climaxes in the judgment of his enemies, all the people of the earth will mourn because of him (v. 8) [... and will come to judge the living and the dead].

4.4. THE SLAIN LAMB IS THE SON OF MAN.

The son of Man in Revelation is a Divine figure who redeemed his people and by his blood as a slaughtered Lamb, established them to become a Kingdom. As a kingdom, God's people are a temple, a place where the Divine figure rests. They designate the Jesus of Revelation as the "Son of Man" (ὄμοιον υἱὸν ἀνθρώπου) (1:13). About 93 times, they also refer to the prophet Ezekiel as the son of man, ἄνθρωπος 2:1; 3:1, 17; 5:1, etc.). Yet calling Jesus the Son of Man, John was not referring to the way they use the title in Ezekiel or elsewhere in the Old Testament corpus. The son of man appellation in Ezekiel focuses mainly on the frailty of human beings— humankind in their weaknesses as opposed to God or gods.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ "In Ezekiel, God addresses the prophet as "son of man" (bēn ādām) ninety-three times, but is uncertain whether the expression emphasizes Ezekiel's mere human status before God, or whether he is being singled out among humans as one who is privileged as God's messenger" (Nickelsburg, 2010:12:49).

Having that connotation, sons of men are not to be trusted according to Ps.146:3. It is in that sense God claims to be neither a man to lie nor a son of man to change his mind (Nb. 23:19). To lie and to change one's mind are what you would expect from a son of man in as far as their fallen nature is concerned. However, the concept "Son of Man" is used with a different connotation in Daniel, in the Gospels, and Revelation than in the way they use it elsewhere in Scripture. Hence, by designating him as Son of Man, "clearly John ascribed the highest place to Christ" (Morris, 1987:58). On this Seiss (1987:37) also points out that "[t]he 'one like unto the Son of man' is Christ himself. They describe him in the same way in the Psalms, in the visions of Daniel and his discourses concerning himself."

Many works have been published on this subject. This researcher is aware of the contentious debate around this expression, Son of Man. For the sake of this study, the researcher does not want to enter that debate.¹⁰⁹ Nevertheless, it is necessary to point out as Müller (2008:419) writes that

[t]he interpretation of the Son of man in the New Testament Gospels is in free fall until it is recognised that the expression does not have any special meaning before it receives it through its concrete context in the respective Gospels.

Therefore, John, one of the Gospel writers, attaches messianic expectations to the expression "Son of Man."¹¹⁰ Concerning the central figure of John's vision, Phillips (2017:67) is right as he points out that "[h]earing a mighty voice speaking, John turned and saw Jesus as *the Divine Son of Man...*" [my emphasis]. Unlike the use of son of man $\alpha\delta\alpha\mu \beta$ elsewhere in the Old Testament, the Danielic son of man is not just the son of man but one like the son of man. He exhibits attributes and characteristics which supersede human nature.

Remarkably, the very first vision of John in Revelation introduces the central character of the book in human terms, the Son of Man (1:13; 14:14). He is the man who has come to dwell amid men, especially in the middle of his people. As a man,

¹⁰⁹ For further reading on this debate see Burkett (1999:121-24) in *The Son of Man Debates*.

¹¹⁰ The researcher is cognoscente of differing opinions concerning authorship of the 4th Gospel and the Revelation. The researcher opinion is rather with the assumption that both the 4th Gospel and the book of Revelation were written by John the apostle of Jesus. For the motivation on this position see the first chapter of this thesis.

he will experience death, which is crucial in his mission of establishing God's kingdom. Stevens (2010:18) rightly points out that "this title alludes to the most common self-reference of Jesus in the Gospels which Jesus used for himself more than all other names combined" (1:13). We observe that the very first title of the central figure of Revelation one encounters in Revelation is Christ, the Messiah (1:1, 2). Yet, the first title one comes across in the *first vision* of John in Revelation is not Christ but the Son of Man (1:13). It is worth showing as Stevens (2010:18) writes that "in this name, Jesus encapsulated his heavenly origin, suffering ministry, redemptive death and resurrected glory—and along the way completely redefined 'Messiah' for Israel."

Placing Jesus Christ *coming with the clouds* in 1:7 next to the concept of *someone looking like a Son of Man* in 1:13 in the same literary context means not only that John is saying Jesus the Messiah who is coming with the clouds is the same person who looks like the Son of Man but also and maybe John wants his readers to associate Jesus Christ with the Son of Man depicted in Dn. 7:13-14.¹¹¹ For, the Son of Man in Daniel has much more significance and it is so unique as opposed to the way the Son of Man is used in Ezekiel and elsewhere in the Old Testament corpus.

For instance, Phillips (2017:62) argues that "Son of Man does not, therefore, denote the mere humanity of Jesus, but rather the fact that this One in the form of man is really God." Though he is described as a human being, he [the son of man] has powerful messianic undertones going beyond human expectations. Besides, it is startling that being a human, the Son of Man may be worshipped. This is far beyond what the son of man in Ezekiel can be referred to. The Son of Man in Daniel is a character who goes to the Ancient of Days to receive his kingdom. This figure is to be *worshipped by* all peoples, nations, and men of every language (Dn. 7:14). The son of man is, according to Hand (2012:103), a *direct allusion to Dn. 7* [my italics]. Hand (2012) argues that "[a]lthough Revelation does not join the title, Son of man, directly with Christ's receiving the kingdom as in Daniel, the title sets the stage for

¹¹¹ By going back to Daniel 7, we rely on the canonical background of the term. Stevens (2010:18) points out three backgrounds of the term Son of Man namely "the canonical background which focuses on Daniel 7, with issues of individuals, corporate, messianic or mythic traditions. Jewish non-canonical background focuses on 1 En. 37-71 and 4 Ezra 13 with its issue of an apocalyptic, heavenly, universal, and exalted figure. Aramaic background focuses on linguistic data with the issue of circumlocution, not title."

the entire book, in which Jesus Christ is receiving *His earthly kingdom and* subduing all nations and peoples before Him” [my italics].

The son of man is the long-awaited king, the Messiah in Daniel’s language. It is also likely that the appellation “Son of Man” could echo the Genesis narrative on Adam, the first man according to biblical texts whom Luke refers to as the son of God, even though he is a man (Lk. 3:38). This is because of the role allocated to Adam as a man concerning His creation. Clowney (2013:23) observes that “[e]ven before we are told the story of the Fall, the Genesis account prepares us for the role Jesus Christ would play in God’s plan of salvation.” To qualify his point, Clowney (2013:23) argues that

[t]he figure Adam at the dawn of human history reminds us that God deals with mankind personally. Adam served as the representative man. Christ came as the second Adam (Rom. 5:12-21; 1 Cor. 15:22) —not as the divine afterthought, but as the One chosen from the foundation of the world to manifest all that the divine image in man may mean.¹¹²

Besides, they also introduce the Revelation reader to Jesus the Son of Man as the priest, though not in explicit terms. For instance, in the inaugural vision, the clothing of the Son of Man, particularly the foot-length robe (ποδήρη) (1:13), and specifically his presence among the seven lamp-stands (επτα λυχνίας χρυσας) allude to the priesthood of Christ.

Further, by his blood, Jesus has ransomed a community and made it a kingdom and a priesthood to serve his God (1:6; 5:9).¹¹³ John wants his readers to associate not

¹¹² For further discussion on the “the son of man” in Revelation see Smith, J. E. (1993:378-382) in *What the Bible Teaches about the Promised Messiah*.

¹¹³ On the priestly allusion of the *Son of Man* based on his foot-length robe see Stevens (2010:22); Beale (1999: 2008); DeSilva (2000:309) among others. Not everyone agrees on this. On the disagreement side see Resseguie (2009:76); Beasley-Murray (1981: 66-67); Osborne (2002:89) and Murphy (1998:90). Morris (1987:58) on the other hand has a different view on this as he contends that “the robe reaching down to his feet is the mark of a person of distinction. Some argue that this robe and the golden sash around his chest indicates that John sees Jesus in priestly dress. Against this, people other than priests wore long robes. Further, though priests did wear the girdle higher than others, in their case it was a woven sash (Exod. 39:29) and not a golden one. John speaks of angels (who were not priests) as girded in this way (15:6). And he does not refer to Christ’s priestly office throughout his book.

only Jesus Christ with being a human and the king but also with his priestly ministry [King/Priest]. That the Revelation's Son of Man is among the lampstands, dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with the golden sash around his chest (1:12, 13) connotes the high priest to everyone familiar with the Old Testament Levitical priesthood (cf. Ex. 28:4; 29:5). As said, like the Son of Man in Daniel, the Son of Man in Revelation is worthy of worship. John fell at his feet as a sign of worship. It is clear from Revelation that this figure is not just a human king and priest but much deeper than that; he is divine; he is God, the Son. He is the First and the Last. He is the Living One (1:17), the God and man, the king (Christ). Hence, he is worthy of worship.

Revelation portrays him as one who was pierced (1:7); he is the firstborn from the dead, and through his sacrificial death, he has freed us from our sins. Death is central to John's Christology. The same applies to the portrayal of Jesus as the Son of Man. He was dead and behold he is alive forever (1:18). Therefore, we can say without a doubt that by placing the imagery of the clouds alongside that of the Son of Man in Revelation (1:7; 14:14), John is compelling his readers to read this passage with Daniel at the forefront of their mind.

The first time John sees Jesus' *presence* in Revelation is curiously not in "heaven", but "living" [not dead] and walking in the midst of the seven lamp-stands i.e., among his people (1:13). That the Son of man is described as already present and alive among his people assumes that he has already redeemed them by being slaughtered. Just like Israel became God's people through redemption by the blood of the Passover Lamb, so the church became God's people by the blood of the Slain Lamb. As the Son of Man, he identifies so well with his human beings, his people. John *heard* Jesus' loud voice behind him like a trumpet (1:10). However, when he turned to see the voice that was speaking to him, he *saw* Jesus and his presence was among his people (1:12-13).

Further, the first time Jesus, the Son of Man, introduces himself to the Church, he describes himself as *walking among* his people (2:1). He is dwelling, living and walking (2:1) among the seven (7) golden lampstand. The latter stands like the picture of the totality of God's people (1:20).

What Yahweh promises and has always desired for Israel in Leviticus 26:12 (cf. Ex. 29:45; Ez. 37:27; 2 Cor. 6:16) is what the Son of Man is doing in the Church—dwelling and walking among them.¹¹⁴

The idea of walking among them has to do with an intimate relationship. The first time we encounter “God walking with people” is in Genesis when Noah and Enoch are described as walking with God (5:21-24; 6:8-9). The word used for walking in Rev. 2:2, “[t]he words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks (σπεριπατων, [lit. the walking one]) among the seven golden lampstands”¹¹⁵ is the same as the one used in Lev. 26:12 (LXX) “καὶ ἐμπεριπατήσω ἐν ὑμῖν καὶ ἔσομαι ὑμῶν θεός καὶ ὑμεῖς ἔσεσθέ μου λαός” (cf. 2 Cor. 6:16). When Yahweh says he will walk among the Israelites and be their God and they will be his people (Lev. 26:12), he reveals the centrality of the concept of his presence and relationship. These are covenantal words.

As said, this has always been Yahweh’s greatest desire (Ps. 132:14). The god(s) resting places in Ancient Near Eastern cultures are temples (cf. Ex. 29:45; Ez. 37:27). Walton (2006:114) points out that

[i]n Mesopotamia the Ziggurat stood beside the temple as the place where the deities descended from the heavens to reside among the people and to receive worship. These temples were constructed to be a place of ‘rest’ for the deity.

Here the concept of rest has nothing to do with inactivity, but with fulfilment and ruling. Paul’s quote from Lev. 26:12 in 2 Cor. 6:16 “I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people” is in connection with the fact that the Church is the temple of God. Thus, God’s resting place where he lives and walks is in his temple, which is his people.

Therefore, in Revelation, the Son of Man’s presence is located among the seven golden lampstands—a place of rest and rule. God’s people are Jesus’ temple. That

¹¹⁴ Morris also sees a connection with the idea that Christ walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstand to Yahweh’s words to Israel in Lev. 26:12. Talking of John, the writer of Revelation, Morris (1987:64) points out that “he is also said to be walking among the lampstands (in 1:13 there was no mention of walking, but c.f. Lev. 26:12; Dan. 3:25). The effect of this salutation is to give a picture of Christ as present in the very midst of the churches, a Christ who is intimately concerned with them and cares for them.”

¹¹⁵ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Rev. 2:1). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

the first time John sees Jesus, he identifies him as the Son of Man whose presence is among his people (1:12-13) is significant to the theology of Revelation. Likewise, the first time Jesus addresses the church, describing himself as walking among his people (2:1) is crucial to the Christology of Revelation. It is vital since what John sees in a vision is what Jesus is establishing in reality described in the book of Revelation. He is building a temple in which he will get his Sabbath or rest and from which he will rule. Revelation represents this temple by the seven churches through which he exercises his rule in the world.

Now, it is interesting that he built his temple as the slaughtered Lamb—by his blood, he ransomed men from every tribe, language, nation, and people and made them his dwelling and resting place (cf. 5:9-10). This is where the lexeme σφάζω is so significant in John's theological agenda.

4.5. THE SLAIN LAMB IS THE SON OF GOD.

Jesus is the Son of God in Revelation in the same way Israel's Davidic king is in the Psalms. Like the title, Christ, the title *Son of God*, has much more to do with Jesus *becoming* a human king of God's people than to do with his essential nature as God the Son.¹¹⁶ It is the one like the son of a man of 1:13 who commands John to write to the Thyatiran Church and intrudes himself as the Son of God (2:18). This proves that the Son of Man of Revelation is a Divine figure. Commenting on the letter to the Thyatiran Church on this title Morris (1987:74) points out that "[t]his is the one letter to use the title the Son of God, indeed the one place where it occurs in Revelation. The description emphasises the majesty of his Person (cf. Ps. 2:6–9, cited in v. 27)."

¹¹⁶ Xeravits (2010:1249) argues that "[e]arly Jewish literature uses the term "son(s) of God" in a complex manner. It can denote both individuals and groups and refers to both earthly and transcendent figures. When used for denoting an individual, in most texts it refers to a positive eschatological protagonist. The title generally emphasises the figure's authority and close relationship to God." Commenting on the appellation "Son of God in Rev. 2:18, Paul (2018:92) points out that "[t]his is the only time in Revelation when Jesus is described as *Son of God*, and this title does not derive from the opening vision. It acquires its significance from three contexts: Jewish, Christian and imperial Roman. Its Jewish meaning derives from the description of God's anointed king as being God's son by adoption. This was promised to David (2 Sam. 7:13 – 14) and is expressed in the Davidic/messianic Psalm 2: 'You are my son; today I have begotten you' (Ps. 2:7, AT) [*italics, original*]. For further reading on both the Christian and the Roman context, see Paul (2018:92-3).

The sonship of Christ about his divinity is never something he has ever become, but his essential nature from all eternity. However, this is not what lies behind the title Son of God in Revelation. Again, like Son of Man, the Son of God is a title pregnant with messianic undertones. It is worth pointing out as Pomykala (2010:940) argues that “one other text from Qumran, 4Q246, may also refer to a Davidic Messiah under the title ‘Son of God’ and ‘Son of the Highest,’ but the text is fragmentary, and the messianic interpretation of the ‘Son of God’ figure is debated.” Jesus is designated as Son of God because like David (1 Sam. 17) he has to conquer on behalf of his chosen people. He does it through death. On his special note, Smith (1993:242) highlights “the titles Messiah and Son of God are brought together in several New Testament passages.” He refers to Peter’s confession (Matt. 16:16), Caiaphas’ query (Matt. 23:66: Mk. 14:61), the parting cries of demons (Lk. 4:41), the affirmation of Martha (Jn. 11:27), the statement of John (Jn. 10:31) and Paul (Acts 9:20-21). Bringing his point home, Smith (1993:242) maintains that “[t]he two titles were probably brought together because the son of God was the logical implication of the Messiah.”

Besides the Jewish context of the appellation Son of God (cf. Ps. 2), the imperial context could also be the backdrop of this designation in Revelation. On this, Paul (2018:92) shows that “[i]n the Roman context the term would be an especially pertinent challenge to the claims of imperial authority. Inscriptions in Thyatira described Domitian as emperor, the high priest, and son of the deified Vespasian.”

In Rev. 2:18 we get the description of the Son of God as having eyes as blazing fire and feet as burning bronze *ως φλογα πυρος και οι ποδες αυτου ομοιοι χαλκολιβανω*. In the blessing of the Prince of the Congregation by the master of the community, it is said: “may He make your horns of iron and your hooves of bronze, may you toss like a young bull [and trample the peoples] like the mire of the streets!” (1QSb=1Q28b). In Qumran texts, it was expected that the coming Messiah would have “feet like hooves of bronze to defeat his enemies!” (1QSb=1Q28b).

Nebuchadnezzar’s statue in Dn. 2 has feet partly made of iron and partly of baked clay to represent the division of the fourth kingdom as a mixture of strength and fragility (vv. 40-43). With the Son of Man in John’s inaugural vision (1:15), John sees him as having feet like burnished bronze. The Son of God in Revelation has his eyes

as blazing fire and feet like burnished bronze (2:18). Stevens (2010:30) comments that “such imagery conjures ideas of strength and stability. Wherever that Son of Man stands, he stands unmoved.”

Besides, this image is a scary picture of the Son of God. In the context of the letter to the Thyatiran Church, it connotes wrath and judgment against wickedness. Words such as “I have this against you...” (2:20), “I will throw her onto a sickbed...” (2:22)¹¹⁷, “and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation” (2:22),¹¹⁸ and “and I will strike her children dead” (2:23)¹¹⁹ are precisely what you would expect from one whose eyes are like blazing fire and feet like burnished bronze, the Son of God. Having his eyes like blazing fire, the Son of God can explore hearts and minds, and with his feet like burnished bronze, he can repay each of them according to their deeds (cf. 2:23). His judgment is fair.

The claim that Ps. 2 is also a background of Jesus’ letter to the Thyatiran church (2:18-29) cannot be easily denied. By reading the message to the Thyatiran church, John intends for his readers to hear echoes of Ps. 2 and the imperial context. Thus, this messianic Psalm informs Jesus’s letter to the church of Thyatira to a great degree. Claiming to be the Son of God (2:18), the Jesus of Revelation does not argue that he is God the Son, namely the second person of the Trinity even though he is, but he claims to be the messianic king of Ps. 2 instead. For, it is to this king who has been installed on Zion, God’s holy mountains (Ps. 2:6) that God says, “You are my son, today I have become your father” (Ps. 2:7). This king is or has become the son of God. This sonship is something that the king has *become* (cf. Today, I have become your father) by being in a special relationship with God and having a particular task to perform on God’s behalf.

Son of God in this context is not something that he has always been. This has nothing to do with the eternal generation of the Son of God. Israel’s kings were known as sons of God because they were considered as God’s special representatives—they were to rule on Yahweh’s behalf. Again, it is to the king of Ps. 2, God says “ask me, and I will give the nations your inheritance and the

¹¹⁷ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Rev. 2:22). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

¹¹⁸ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Rev. 2:22). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

¹¹⁹ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Rev. 2:23). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

end of the earth your possession. You will break them with a rod of iron, and you will dash them to pieces like pottery” (2:8, 9).

It is clear from this text that breaking the nations with a rod of iron and dashing them to pieces like pottery is the authority the Davidic king receives from God, who has just become his Father on the day (today) of his enthronement. Interestingly, the Jesus of Revelation, after claiming to be this king and announced himself as *the Son of God* (2:18), promises the victors of the church of Thyatira the same authority, he has received from his Father (2:26, 27). The Father-Son relationship here has more to do with kingship than it does with divinity. Therefore, John is still emphasising that Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah who has been appointed by God as the king of his people.

4.6. THE SLAIN LAMB IS THE LION OF JUDAH.

The Lion of the tribe of Judah (Λέων ὁ ἐκ τῆς φυλῆς Ἰούδα) is another noteworthy appellation of Jesus in Revelation (Rev. 5:5). This designation as Bauckham (1993:69) points out is a “title evoking the image of the Royal Messiah of David who would defeat the nations by military violence: ‘Lion of Judah’ (cf. Gen. 49:9; 4 Ezz. 12:31-2).”¹²⁰ In Revelation, if Jesus is the Lion, the beast out of the sea and the beast out of the land are essential enemies of God’s people. We have already observed that we owe David the messianic hopes. Speaking on David, Koester (2001:77) shows that “he [David] was a warrior who fought *like a lion and* conquered neighbouring peoples to establish the kingdom of Israel” [my italics]. Jesus is, however, the Lion, the king overall. John juxtaposes the Lion of the clan of Judah and the Root of David in a careful and compelling manner.

That the appellation of Jesus as the Lion of the tribe of Judah alludes to Jacob’s messianic prophecy on Judah in Gen. 49:8-12 has been noticed by many scholars. That John mentions the imagery of the sword that comes out of Christ’s mouth (1:16; 2:12; 16; 19:21), with which he strikes down the nations (19:15 cf. Isa. 11:4; 49:2) and states that Christ will judge with righteousness (19:11 cf. Isa 11:4) suggests the allusion to a Davidic Messiah (Bauckham, 1993:69).

¹²⁰ “The lion is a symbol of the Messiah in 2 Esdras 12:31–32, so it may well have been an accepted messianic designation, at least in some circles” argues Morris (1987:97).

Our interest, however, is the link of this metaphor to Jesus' kingship. Judah is described not only as Lion's cub (Gen. 49:9), but more than that Jacob specifies that the scepter will not go away from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet (Gen. 49:10). The scepter and the staff are instruments of power, hence have kingly undertones. Jacob's word to Judah is a definite promise of kingship that will never go away from him. His words single out a future king to whom the objects of monarchy, namely the scepter and the staff, belong. It is there, and we see the expectation for the Messiah who will be king of God's people.

Hence, the association of kingship and the lion metaphor is clear in the first volume of our canonical Bible, Gen. 49. It is, however, in the final book that it will be fully realised in Christ Jesus (Rev. 5:5, 6). John picks it up because, like other metaphors of his choice, it serves his purpose of presenting Jesus as the Messiah, the God-man king of God's people.

If his readers were familiar with the Old Testament, which they were, they would straight away think of the Messiah when John mentions the Lion of the clan of Judah. The apparent association is the King-Messiah of the Davidic line, hence the juxtaposition of the lion of the tribe of Judah and the Root of David. That Jesus is the long-awaited king of Judah cannot be missed by any careful reader of Revelation.

The blessings intended for the messianic age and the ceremony of the institution of a new community in Qumran were recited by the Master or Guardian. The Guardian classifies these blessings in four categories—the blessings of the faithful, i.e. all members of the community, the blessings of the high priest, the blessings of the priests, i.e. Zadok's sons and the blessings of the *Prince of the Congregation*. The concept of blessing in Jewish and biblical thought is a word endowed with significant theocentric meaning. It gives and defines one's purpose and a reason for being. For example, the blessings assigned to the Prince of Congregation were a fourfold aspect of the Spirit which is more Isaianic in connotation—the Spirit of counsel, of everlasting, might, of knowledge and the fear of God, the righteousness and the faithfulness (1QSb=1Q28b). These words identify the Branch from Jesse, who is the messianic figure in Isaiah,

[t]he Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord—and he will delight in fear of the Lord. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes or decide by what he hears with his ears (11:2, 3).

In the blessing, the Prince of the Congregation's horns is to be made like iron and his hooves like bronze. Speaking to him and elaborating on why he needs all these blessings, the Master of the community says “[f]or God has established you as the sceptre. The rulers ... and all the kings of the nations shall serve you. He shall strengthen you with his holy name, and you shall be as a lion, and you shall not lie down until you have devoured the prey which nought shall deliver” (1QSb=1Q28b). The “for” indicates the purpose which comes with the blessing. In this blessing, the metaphor of the lion is associated with the Prince of the Congregation, who is presented in strong messianic overtones.¹²¹ These blessings are realised only within the messianic age.

The Qumran also designates the Prince of the Congregation as the Branch of David, the Messiah of Israel (4Q285). They echo both the Branch of Jesse's text in Isaiah 11 and Jacob's blessing on Judah in Gen. 49. Thinking of the Messiah within a lion's symbolism was therefore familiar to John's readers.¹²²

Further, in the commentary of Nahum, they describe the principal character as the furious young lion. This character is a Jewish ruler. According to some scholars, historically it referred to Alexander Jannaeus of Jerusalem. He could also be the one who is labelled as the Last Priest in the commentary of Hosea (cf. 4Q167 11 2-3). There, they record it that this furious young lion took revenge on the so-called “seekers of smooth things” who were accused of inviting Demetrius the king of Greece to Jerusalem. The attempt is said to have failed, and they crucified the enemies of the furious lion. It is likely that these words allude to what is documented elsewhere that “[a]ccused of plotting against Alexander Jannaeus in 88 BCE in collusion with the Syrian Seleucid king Demetrius III Eucerus, 800 Pharisees were

¹²¹ “Two other royal-messianic labels feature in Qumran texts, the Messiah of Israel and the Prince of the Congregation for the Davidic Messiah” points out Pomykala (2010:939).

¹²² “For God has established you as the sceptre. The rulers ... [and all the kings of the] nations shall serve you. He shall strengthen you with His holy Name and you shall be as a [lion; and you shall not lie down until you have devoured the] prey which naught shall deliver” (1QSb; 1Q28b)

condemned by Jannaeus to die on the cross” (Antiquities xiii, 380-83; War 1, 96-8). The furious young lion *crucified* his enemies—the so-called seekers of smooth things (the Pharisees of Antiquities).

In the same commentary, we read, “... and your wound shall not be healed (v, 13). [Its interpretation concerns] ... the furious young lion ...For I will be like a lion to Ephraim and like a young lion to the house of Judah (v, 14a). [Its interpretation concerns the last Priest who shall stretch out his hand to strike Ephraim ...]” (4Q167, fr. 2cf. Commentaries on Hosea (4Q166—7)).¹²³

Ironically, in Revelation, the Lion of the tribe of Judah is not the one doing the action of slaughtering and crucifying his enemies. He is, however, on the receiving end of those actions. He is the one who is slain (5; 5, 6), pierced (1:7) and crucified (11:8) in Jerusalem. The latter is paradoxically the same place where the furious lion, Alexander Jannaeus, crucified his enemies, the Pharisees. The strength of the Lion of Revelation is not in crucifying and slaughtering his enemies, but in him being crucified and slaughtered as the Lamb.

4.7. THE SLAIN LAMB IS THE ROOT OF DAVID.

Twice, in Revelation Jesus is depicted as the Root of David (ἡ ῥίζα Δαυίδ) (5:6; 22:16), once as the offspring of David (τὸ γένος Δαυίδ) (22:16) and as the One holding the key of David (ὁ ἔχων τὴν κλεῖν Δαυίδ) (3:7). King David is a significant figure in the messianic theology.¹²⁴ Bauckham (1993:68) highlights that

[i]dentifying Jesus as the Davidic Messiah is essential in Revelation, partly because for John as a Jewish Christian prophet, it is one of the ways in which he can gather up the hopes of the Old Testament prophetic tradition into his own eschatological vision centred on Jesus.

In the Old Testament, one thing associated with David so commonly is the city of Jerusalem, which is also called the city of David (1 Chr. 11:4-8). In Revelation, on

¹²³ Cf. Dimant (1994:1053).

¹²⁴ Morris (1987:97) writes “[t]he Root of David is another expression not found in the Old Testament, though we read of the Root of Jesse (Isa. 11:1, 10, LXX), and in Ecclesiasticus that God gave to David ‘a root of his stock’ (Ecclus. 47:22). All these seem to denote a ‘shoot’ rather than a ‘root’; they refer to someone who has sprung from David rather than one of his ancestors. John thus means that Jesus was born of David’s line (cf. 22:16).”

the one hand, John portrays the people of God as a city, the bride of the Lamb which is the New Jerusalem (22:9-27), and on the other, John depicts the followers of the beast, i.e. the earth-dwellers as a city, the harlot which is Babylon (18:1-24). In both texts, a city is used metaphorically to represent people. This is well anticipated in one of the Zion songs, Ps.125:2 “As the mountains surround *Jerusalem*, so the Lord surrounds his *people*, from this time forth and forevermore”¹²⁵ [my italics] in which the simile equates and compares mountains with the Lord and Jerusalem with God’s people. Jerusalem, as already discussed, is known in the Old Testament as the City of David (cf. 1 Chr. 11:4-8; 15:1-29). Now, for Jesus to be the one holding the key of David, it means that He is the one having absolute authority over the New Jerusalem—the new community of believers, the new people of God. He has authority and control of this community because it is his. He is the one who purchased it with his blood and has made it a kingdom filled with priests to serve his God (cf. 5:9).

Hence, to the victors of the Philadelphia Church, Jesus promises to make them a pillar in the *temple of his God*. He also promises to write on them the name of his God and the name of the *city of his God*, the *new Jerusalem which is coming down out of heaven from his God* (3:12). Such promises are what you would expect from the one who claims to hold the key of David (3:7). In Scripture, the city of Jerusalem and its Temple cannot be separated.¹²⁶

Further, in the Old Testament, particularly in the so-called Zion theology, King David is identified with the city of Jerusalem in which the Temple was built (2 Sm. 5:7; 1 Kgs. 2:10; Lk. 2:11). Though made by Solomon, as seen in Ps.132, the building of the Jerusalem Temple was the highest priority of David’s reign (Smith, 1993:97). The capturing of Zion and making it the city of his own is the first thing David has done after all the tribes of Israel have made him a King (Pink, 1993:271). Payne (1982:178) points out that “[m]ost important of all, he [David] made it [Jerusalem] *the religious capital*” [his italics]. As a religious capital, Jerusalem hosted the great and glorious temple of God. The city and its temple are so connected that the pilgrim in Ps.120-122 longed for Jerusalem and once at that place he immediately travelled to the Temple, the house of God.

¹²⁵ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Ps. 125:2). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

¹²⁶ Cf. Ps. 46

In Revelation, the city of Jerusalem stands for the redeemed community of the people of God (cf. 21:9-27). Like the historical David, Jesus Christ's top priority was to glorify his Father by purchasing through his blood (1:5; 5:9-10) a people which is the New Jerusalem and make them his own. In the first section of Revelation (1-3), John's vision of the Son of Man shows us several things he holds in his right hand—the seven stars (1:16; 2:1, 3:1), the keys of death and Hades (1:18), the seven spirits (3:1), and the key of David (3:7).

Though the Old Testament is full of hints of messianic hope, it is with King David this becomes explicit in the Jewish expectation of a coming King (cf. Hos. 3:5; Isa. 16:5; Jer. 23:5-6). However, it is Ezekiel who is most explicit in calling this messianic figure, the future David. In Ez. 37:24-28 (cf. Hos. 3:5), this David will be the shepherd-king of God's people. The coming "David" of Ez. 37 is God's solution to the corrupt shepherd-hood of Israel time.

In the New Testament and particularly in Revelation this expected character appears to be Jesus Christ (cf. Jn. 10:11-18; 1 Pet. 5:4; Heb. 13:20). In Rev. 7, the Lamb will be the *shepherd*, or he will shepherd to be specific. He will, therefore, shepherd and lead God's people to the springs of living water (7:17). The shepherd metaphor is a powerful way of describing God as the provider of guidance and security in a world full of uncertainties and insecurities. The Lamb of Revelation is, therefore, the "my servant David" who "will be king over them" and the "One Shepherd", (37:24). This is true because the *covenant of peace*, which the Lord promises for Israel (37:26-26), is only realised through the blood of the slaughtered Lamb.

In Ezekiel, the LORD promises to bring all Israel's tribes together (37:15-20) and increase their number (37:26) and so there will be one Shepherd-King over them who is the LORD's servant David. In Revelation, John heard the number (144,000) of all the united tribes of Israel (7:1-8), and what he sees later is an "*increased*" number that he could not even count (7:9) and the Lamb will be their shepherd (7:17).¹²⁷

The hope of a good shepherd-king came about because all of Old Testament Israel's kings, including the so-called incomparable ones—such as King Solomon with his remarkable wisdom, king Hezekiah with his astonishing faithfulness and king Josiah

¹²⁷ The 144, 000 and the countless number semantically the same number. Yet, it is used by John a literary style which matches the Ezekiel prophecy.

with his surprising obedience failed to be good shepherds of God's people.¹²⁸ They could not provide positive leadership and guidance to God's people. Startlingly, even in Kings, which in Scripture is the volume devoted to Israel and Judah's kings, none of them is called shepherd. However, the only mention of the word *shepherd* in Kings is as a negative —Micaiah raises a complaint that God's people are scattered like sheep *without a shepherd* (1 Kgs. 22:17). There was no shepherd king. Israel's kings were meant to be shepherds who could take care, protect and provide for them, but failed to do so (cf. Ez. 37). Hence, there was a hope of a future shepherd-king who will tend God's people.

In Johannine theology, it is unambiguously, Jesus who fulfils that messianic hope (Jn. 10). The Jesus of Revelation is the shepherd-king Israel has always been looking for. In Revelation, the verb to shepherd is used with Jesus as the subject (7:17; 19:15). It seems to this researcher that in both [7:17 & 19:15] the word has a positive connotation of Jesus' role to his people. The verb "will shepherd" (ποιμανεῖ) translated as *will rule* in the NIV in both 7:17 and 19:15 refers to the same object and the same subject— Jesus as the subject and the nations as the object. In chap. 7 the object is the great multitude that no one could count from every *nation* (ἐκ παντὸς ἔθνους)... standing before the throne of God (7:9). In 19:15, the object of the verb is the nations (τὰ ἔθνη). The starting point of Jesus providing a shepherdhood to his flock is by being slaughtered as Lamb for their sake.

That the coming Messiah will be a king from the Davidic line was presented in the Old Testament theology. In many scrolls, it is also envisioned that the Messiah should be a royal figure, Davidic and triumphant (cf. 4Q285, 4Q161). In the Qumran community's thought, this figure is the Prince of the Congregation. Hence, he is also designated as the Branch of David, the Messiah of Israel (4Q285). John tells his readers so explicitly that Jesus is the progeny of David that his readers could only recall the Messianic hopes which come along with that appellation. He is the Root of David, the offspring of David, and holds the key of David in Revelation (3:7; 5:5). The

¹²⁸ Elaborating on the failure of kingship before and after exile, Stevens (2010:24) writes "[i]ncluding David and Solomon; David was not allowed to build the temple because of his warlike spirit (1 Kgs. 5:3), and Solomon, though famous for his wisdom in the end blended into the background of pagan kingship patterns with his political alliances, many wives, and corrupt court (1 Kgs. 11:1-11). In later generations, the notable cultic reforms of Hezekiah (2 Kgs. 18:1-6) did not last even one generation, as the son who ruled immediately after him, Manasseh was the vilest king Judah ever endured (2 Kgs. 21:1-17), and later Josiah's rule was cut short by his untimely death due to an ill-advised battle with Pharaoh Neco (2 Kgs. 22:1-23:30)."

Gospels call him the *son* of David, which means the same as the offspring of David. They all point to one thing—the coming and long-awaited king. He is the Messiah and the king of God’s people.

In 22:6, the angel says it is “*the Lord, the God* who inspires the prophets sends his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place” [emphasis mine]. Yet, in 22:16, Jesus claims to be the one who sent his angel to give John this testimony for the churches (I, Jesus, have sent my angel...). Jesus identifies himself with the Lord, the God of 22:6. This is the divine side of this messianic figure of Revelation. He is God in his essential being.

Further, he claims to be the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End (22:13). Who is this figure? It is Jesus, the Root and the Offspring of David (22:16). The King Messiah of Revelation is God-man. The Lord, the God (22:6) and the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End is something he has always been from eternity past to eternity future. The Root, the Offspring of David, is something he once became.

In one text from Qumran, it is chronicled that the means through which the Prince of the Congregation, also called the Branch of David, would kill his enemies is by strokes and wounds. His enemy called Kittim will be slaughtered,

[[a]s it is written in the book of Isaiah the Prophet, the thickets of the forest will be cut down with an axe and Lebanon by a majestic one will fall. And there shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse [...] the Branch of David and they will enter into judgment with [...], and the Prince of the Congregation, the Branch of David *will kill him... by strokes and by wounds*. And a Priest of renown (?) will command... *the slain* of the Kittim¹²⁹... [my italics] (4Q285 v 4 cf. fr. 7).

What occurs to the Root and the Offspring of David in Revelation [“being slain” cf. 5:6] is the inverse of what the scroll describes concerning the Prince of the Congregation. Unlike the Prince of the Congregation, the Root of David in Revelation is the wounded and slaughtered Lamb. Unlike what the envisioned Messiah, the

¹²⁹ This is “Israel’s eschatological enemy in the Qumran texts and a clear reference to the Romans” (Pomykala, 2010:939).

Prince of the Congregation does to his enemies, the Root of David in Revelation is the Lamb who has a stroke and this stroke is part of who he is (5:6). *It proudly identifies him.* The means through which the Prince of the Congregation kills his foes, i.e. by the stroke and the wound is the very means through which the Root of the David in Revelation fulfils the messianic hopes. The thing that the Prince of the Congregation does to his enemies is ironically what is done to the Root of David, who is the Lamb in Revelation.

4.8. THE SLAIN LAMB IS THE KING.

If the above Christological designations allude to Jesus' kingship, the titles King of Kings (βασιλεὺς βασιλέων) (17:14; 19:16) and Ruler of the kings of the earth (ὁ ἄρχων τῶν βασιλέων τῆς γῆς) (1:5) explicitly state that fact about Jesus. Elaborating on the three offices of Christ in Revelation, i.e. prophet, priest and particularly on the king, Hand (2012:113) points out that "the kingship of Christ stands out most clearly among his offices in Revelation. He exercises all facets of government: legislative, executive, and judicial." Scholars have also noticed the golden belt on the waist of the Son of Man in the inaugural vision (1:13) as an allusion to a kingly belt (cf. Stevens, 2010:23; Murphy 1998:90). The title Lord of lords (ὅτι κύριος κυρίων ἐστίν) (17:14 cf. 19:16) points so much to Christ's sovereignty over every creation by being both God and king. It is in this sense he is called the ruler of God's creation in 3:14. The Johannine use of the ὁ ἄρχων seems to be threefold. If they present the devil as the ruler (ὁ ἄρχων) or prince of this world in John's Gospel (12:31; 14:30), in Revelation, Jesus is both the ruler (ὁ ἄρχων) of the "kings of the earth", and the ruler (ἡ ἀρχὴ) of God's creation (1:5; 3:14). The NIV is probably right to translate the words archē of God's creation in 3:14 as the *ruler* rather than the *origin* of God's creation.

This translation agrees first with the original work assigned to Christ as the king in Revelation, i.e. establishing God's kingdom and ruling over it. Second, it fits with the promise Christ makes to the victors of the Laodicean church to whom he introduced himself as the archē of God's universe (3:14, 21). Since Jesus claims to be the one on the throne and ruling God's creation, he can then, based on that promise to give the victor the right to sit also with him on the throne (3:21). Third, the ἡ ἀρχὴ of God's creation must be understood considering what John meant by the ὁ ἄρχων of the

“kings of the earth” in 1:5. If John meant the community of believers, which this researcher supposes he did when speaking of “*the kings of the earth*” in 1:5, then 3:14 is likely to extend his kingship and ruling—He reigns over the people of God and the entire world. Bauckham prefers the word *origin* over *ruler* for archē in 3:15 (1993:56), but it seems unlikely this is what John intended.

Further, for Bauckham (1993:69) and many other scholars, the phrase “*the kings of the earth*” is John’s standard term for the political powers opposed to God which Christ will subdue. McDonald (1996:44) agrees with Bauckham as she points out that “the phrase ‘the kings of the earth’ is one of the many ways in which the seer refers to those who oppose God.” That is likely the vast majority of the meaning of the phrase in Revelation. It is not the only meaning everywhere that this phrase occurs in Revelation. There are at least two exceptions (1:5; 21:24). The phrase “kings of the earth” appears once in the opening section (1–3 cf. 1:5) and once in the closing section (20–22 cf. 21: 24) with a more positive connotation than in the rest of the book.

A close reading of the phrase “the kings of the earth” (αἱ βασιλείαι τῆς γῆς) in Revelation will agree that the term has both positive and negative connotations, depending on who their ruler (ὁ ἄρχων) is. In a positive sense, it [the phrase “*kings of the earth*”] denotes the community of believers. The latter are kings because they have been made a *kingdom* and priests (a priesthood) by the Lamb to serve God, the Father (cf. Ps. 89:27). Further, this community of faith is probably referred to as “*kings of the earth*” in 1:5, because it has a promise of inheriting and reigning on the earth (5:10). Again, in 14:3, this community is said to be those who have been redeemed from the earth (οἱ ἠγορασμένοι ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς), and in 5:10 they will reign on earth (βασιλεύουσιν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς). In this sense [redeemed from the earth to reign on earth] they are the kings of the earth, having Jesus Christ as their ὁ ἄρχων as opposed to the “earth-dwellers” οἱ κατοικοῦντες ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς (13:8) who are no other than the followers of the beast. This agrees with the fact that Jesus is the ὁ ἄρχων, the ruler of God’s people. He exercises his power by governing them, and they *submit* to his rule by following him as the Lamb wherever he goes (14:4).

These “kings of the earth” over whom Jesus exercises his rule are the ones that will bring their splendour into the city, the New Jerusalem, which represents them

(21:14). At Rev. 21:14, the terms “*nations*” and “*kings of the earth*” are used interchangeably— they epitomise the same people, God’s people, the church which is the community of the followers of the Lamb.¹³⁰ Also, the context of Rev. 21 does not suggest that the designation “kings of the earth” of v. 24 have a negative connotation. Everything detailed in Rev. 21 paints and enhances the beauty and the glory of the city, the New Jerusalem. In fact, Rev. 21:27 which states that “*nothing impure* will ever enter it nor will *anyone who does anything shameful, or deceitful*, but only those whose names are written the Lamb’s book of life,” rules out a possibility of conferring any negative connotations to the terminology “kings of the earth” of that chapter (21:24). The “nations” who will walk by the light of the city and the “kings of the earth” who will bring their splendour into the city (21:24) are the same people. In this context, those words are used interchangeably. These “nations” and “kings of the earth” of 21:24 are an integral part of those whose names are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life (21:27).

The conversion of the nations and their appearance in the New Jerusalem in Revelation is a bone of contention among many New Testament scholars. The issue is on the apparent contradiction of the fact that on the one hand; the nations seem to be destroyed, and whereas they seem to be restored and converted at the end of the book. Sweet (1979, 1981), Mathewson (2003), Bauckham (1993), and McNicol are so far on the leading list for the discussion of the conversion of the nations in Revelation. This researcher will attempt to engage a bit with the above scholarly work in the succeeding chapter.

However, the “earth-dwellers” are all those whose names are not written in the Lamb’s Book of Life (13:8). The “earth-dwellers” are also those who “destroy the earth” (11:18). Therefore, the label ὁ ἄρχων (ruler) in 1:5 refers to Jesus as the king of God’s people. Its inference has more to do with *what he does* to them; he governs them as opposed to *who he is* to them, the king. Jesus, as said, is not only the ὁ ἄρχων of God’s people but much more than that he is presented most strongly as the King of kings and Lord of Lords (17:14; 19:16). In this sense, even the “kings of the earth” (6:15; 16:14; 19:19) —all rulers, not only Rome’s installed kings but all the local ruling classes of the Roman Empire (Bauckham, 1993:242) —who submit and

¹³⁰ McDonald’s views (1996:44-45) on the reading of the phrase kings of the earth in 1:5 and 21:15 do not seem compelling to me especially as they make John appear inconsistent.

give allegiance to the beast are under the kingship and lordship i.e. sovereignty of Christ.

John's insertion of the phrase "kings of the earth" in the opening (1:5) and closing (21:24) sections with its positive connotations stands in sharp contrast to the use of the term in the rest of the book (6:15; 16:14; 19:19). This point shows that unlike all the ruling classes of the Roman Empire, the community of believers are the "kings of the earth" in the real sense of the term. This is because they have been redeemed by the blood of the slaughtered Lamb from the earth (14:3) to become a kingdom (1:6; 5:10) that will reign forever with Christ on earth (5:10). "The centrality of the throne in the book of Revelation depicts the kingship of Christ" contends Hand (2012:115).

4.9. THE SLAIN LAMB IS THE FAITHFUL WITNESS.

The witness motif is central to the theology of Revelation. It permeates the entire narrative of the Apocalypse, especially its ecclesiology. As it will be shown in the next chapter of this study, that witness (testimony, prophecy) is a significant element of Revelation Christology, particularly of its ecclesiology in depicting the identity of the community of believers in the extension of God's kingdom, and in reaching out to the conversion of the nations. It is worthwhile at this point to bring in once more Finamore's (2009:140) submission on this as he contends that

[o]ne of the critical understandings of Jesus in Revelation is that he is the faithful witness. The term retains its forensic flavour but giving of testimony is related in the text to dying, and so the word and its cognates carry some of the connotations of the English word martyr.

In Revelation, the faithfulness and truthfulness of Christ in his witness leading to his death are paradigmatic to the missionary work of the Church in the world.

Though this is not a place for an exhaustive Christology of the Revelation, unless we discuss this motif, we will not do justice to the theme of who Jesus is to the fact that he is the slaughtered Lamb. For Jesus' faithfulness goes as far as being slain as the Lamb to accomplish his messianic roles. Koester (2001:50) rightly points out that "although the Greek word for 'witness' (ὁ μάρτυς) was not a technical term for a 'martyr' when John wrote Revelation, Christ's faithfulness resulted in death."

Further, though from the immediate context of 1:5, the expression ‘faithful witness’ could “testify to Jesus’ faithful transmission of the Revelation” as recorded in 1:1 (Trafton, 2005:19), from a broader context of Revelation, it is in his death as the slain Lamb where we see the pinnacle of his faithfulness in the witness he stood for.¹³¹ Witherington (2003:76) is right as he contends that “the close association of his faithful witness and his resurrection implies that the witness entails death.”

We find twice this description of Jesus in the first section of the book (1–3). In the opening doxology of Revelation, Jesus the Messiah is introduced as the Faithful Witness, “ὁ μάρτυς, ὁ πιστός” (1:5). To the Laodicean Church, Jesus presents himself as the “Amen, *the faithful and true witness*, the ruler of God’s creation,” ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστὸς καὶ [ὁ] ἀληθινός (3:14). After the second last section of Revelation (17– 19), John saw heaven standing open and there before him was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True (19:11). Observing on the opening doxology of Revelation, particularly 1:5, Paul (2018:62) writes, “[t]he threefold description of *Jesus Christ* derives from Ps. 89, which combines praise of God’s faithfulness, delight in the Davidic kingship and lament over its failure” [italics original].¹³² This allusion to the Davidic kingship is significant because at the heart of John’s Christology in Revelation is the depiction of Jesus Christ as the Davidic messiah. Hence, Paul (2018:62) continues “like the ideal David, Jesus is a faithful witness reflecting the permanence of the moon (Ps. 89:37) ...”

4.10. ΣΦΆΖΩ AT THE HEART OF THE REVELATION CHRISTOLOGY.

The previous sections have attempted to flesh out some depictions of Jesus in Revelation, especially in as far as his messianic titles and roles are concerned. The messianic claims assigned to Jesus and his mission in Revelation revolves around Jesus as the slaughtered Lamb. The researcher has also tried to touch on how the depiction of Jesus as the slain Lamb connoted in the lexeme σφάζω fits into the Revelation depiction of him as the long-awaited King, with his significant role of establishing God’s kingdom on earth.

¹³¹ “The life, death and resurrection of Jesus bring the testimony of God’s truth to the world. His followers are expected to witness to the same truth in the same way as he did and their testimony will augment the consequences of his” (Finamore, 2009:140).

¹³² See Smalley (2005:34).

In this section, the researcher will develop and solidify that the application of the lexeme σφάζω to the Lamb Christology of Revelation is both his identity and crucial to his mission. On the one hand, the Jesus of Revelation is the slaughtered Lamb, and on the other, his mission is to establish God's kingdom on earth. This aspect of Jesus' identity is the most excellent answer to the question of the predicament of the community of believers and the cosmos. The researcher will now show this mostly by analysing in-depth the vision of Rev. 5 since it is in this vision where the lexeme σφάζω applies thrice to the Lamb. The final time the lexeme applies to the Lamb is in Rev. 13:8, though it is implied everywhere the term Lamb occurs in reference to Jesus.

4.10.1. The familiarity of some messianic titles in Rev 5.

We have already noted that there is a relationship between some things John hears and sees in Revelation. John uses “*hear/see*” as a dominant literary style.¹³³ Many scholars have already noted that (cf. Bauckham, 1993:215-216). In some places in Revelation, what John sees explains, expands or fulfils what he hears or vice versa. Often what John hears is what he and his readers were already well acquainted with, i.e. the Davidic messianic hopes and their familiar metaphors and so they would not question his description, but what he sees is sometimes shocking, unfamiliar and unexpected to his readers.

For this reason, in this literary style, the reality what John *hears* is not excessively developed since it was already the familiar one to most of his audience. Therefore, in using this literary style, John selects and expands upon things that are the most unbelievable. For instance, applying *the* “hear/see” literary form to Revelation Christology, John hears the Lion of Judah and the Root of David, but he sees the unfamiliar concept of the Davidic Messiah as the Slaughtered Lamb (5:6). Traditionally, it would be more natural for John's readers to associate the imagery of the Lion of Judah and the Root of David with the long-awaited Messiah as opposed to the symbolism of the Lamb, especially the slaughtered Lamb.

¹³³ Bauckham has done a good work on this motif and I would strongly recommend him on this (1993:215, 16). For further reading I would also recommend Paul (2018:132).

Coming to the ecclesiology of the book, John *hears* that *the number of God's servants* to be sealed are depicted as *144, 000 of the tribes of Israel* (7:3, 4), yet he *sees* the people of God presented as a vast community that no one could count, not from Israel but *every nation, tribe, people and language* (7:9). This is so since it could be more usual to John and his readers to think of Israel as God's servants than associating "barbarian" nations with the whole idea of serving God (7:15). On this, Gorman (2011:109), writes,

the imagery of the Lamb and of 'a kingdom and priests serving God' (5:10; cf. 1:6; Ex 19:6) is reminiscent of the Passover and Exodus stories, only this time the redeemed people come, not from one nation, but 'from every tribe and language and people and nation' (5:9; cf. 7:9; 21:24; 22:2).

Further, John *hears* about the bride, the wife of the Lamb, yet he *sees* the city, the New Jerusalem from above (21). With the last one, John begins with what seems to be the unfamiliar imagery to his readers to the familiar one. In this case, the usual is the one to interpret the former.

4.10.2. The "non-familiarity" of the slain Lamb title in Rev 5.

Since this chapter concentrates on the Christological dimension of the role of the lexeme $\sigma\phi\acute{\alpha}\zeta\omega$ in Revelation, the researcher will now go with John's "hear/see" literary style as it is employed to the Lamb Christology in Rev. 5, and leave the ecclesiological dimension of the lexeme for the next chapter.

By seeing the Lamb, looking as though slain, when he expected to see the Lion (5:6), John wants his readers to now see the messianic figure in those terms. In Revelation, neither the Lion of Judah imagery nor the Root of David metaphor is developed in-depth since they both belong to the "hear" category in this literary style. They somewhat belong to the familiarity of both the writer and his readers. John fleshes out the Lamb imagery because it is the unacquainted concept, and it is the one that explains the former better. His readers might have known the concept of the Lamb, especially from the Old Testament corpus. The Lamb evokes ideas of sacrifices, atonement, and expiation. However, many of the Jews never expected the Messiah in that sense. Though some of the extra-biblical literature (11Q Melchizedek

cf. The Test of Levi) have a view of a priestly Messiah and the *sacrifice* that he will offer for the sins of Israel, none of them thought of the Messiah as the *very* sacrifice for sin. On this Seccombe (2002:102) writes that

[t]he Qumran community anticipated that their saviour-king would make atonement for the sin of all the children of light. To be sure they did not think that he *would sacrifice himself* but that he will deal with sin by sacrifice was part of their programme because it was part of the Old Testament programme (Deut. 32:43; Dn. 9:24) [my italics].

For this reason, presenting the Messiah as the slaughtered Lamb, which evokes ideas of his death as a sacrifice, was never an idea that John's readers could easily comprehend. Still, for John, the Messiah is not expected to offer a lamb for sacrifice, but he is the slaughtered Lamb himself. He is offering himself, "to him, who loves us and has freed us from our sins *by his blood*" (1:6). In John's Gospel, it is recorded that Jesus is "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn. 1:29). However, this text does not explicitly indicate the manner through which the Lamb will take away the sin of the world. Nonetheless, that John introduces him as the Lamb implies that Jesus himself will be the sacrifice for sin. This truth is something John wants his readers to see (look or to behold), "*Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!*" [My italics].¹³⁴ In Revelation, when John looks, he *sees and beholds* the Lamb, looking as slaughtered (Rev. 5:6). It is often alleged that what one sees will remain longer in their memories as opposed to what they read.

4.10.3. The outstanding mark of the Lamb in Rev 5.

It is vital to note (1) what the Lamb looks like (5:6) —looking as though slain "ἔσφαγμένον" (2) where it stands (5:6) —standing at the centre of the throne (3) who encircled it (5:6) —surrounded by the four living creatures and elders (4) its features (5:6) —seven horns and seven eyes, which are seven spirits of God sent into all the earth (5) and what it does (6:7) —it went and took the scroll from the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. The Lamb will later start opening the seals, one by one (cf. 6:1).

¹³⁴ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Jn. 1:29). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

Of all these five characteristics of the Lamb imagery, it is the *marks of slaughter* that caught the seer's attention. The signs of slaughter are the most outstanding of everything John sees about the Lamb in Revelation. Commenting on these imageries of Rev. 5, Goldsworthy (1984:22) points out that “[b]y a skilful use of apocalyptic images, John illuminates the central paradox of the gospel. The victory of God was the humiliation and death of his Son.” The “standing as though slain” of the Lamb stands out and comes first in John's observation.

Further, that the Lamb is slaughtered is emphasised thrice in the second section of the book (5:6, 9, 12), and once in fourth (13:8). It is as if John was stating to his readers that of everything you may know about the Lamb, never omit the fact that it bears the marks of slaughter. It is the slain Lamb and is identified as such. It worth pointing out now that “although it [the Apocalypse] reads like an animal story (Rev. 11:7; 12:1-17; 13:1-18; 17:1-18), it is not really about animals” (Paulien, 2003:159). Still, on the Apocalypse of John Paulien (2003:159) argues that

It is a cartoon fantasy about people and their relationships, about interactions among groups of people, both good and evil, about the relationship between God and the human race, and how human history is going to turn out. In other words, it is a cartoon about the same kinds of issues we all wrestle with from day to day.

The slaughtering ideas painted in the lexeme σφάζω are so explicit that not only it is the very first thing John notices about the Lamb when he sees it (5:6), but likewise, it is the very first thing those who encircled the Lamb, i.e. the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders highlight in their praises as the reason the Lamb is worthy to carry the scroll and to open its seals (5:9). The emphasis goes as far as pointing to the reality of the slain Lamb as “many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands”¹³⁵ also praise the worthiness of the slain Lamb (5:11). The signs of slaughter expressed in the lexeme σφάζω are so substantial that they can never pass unnoticed in Revelation. Thus, it is a remarkable fact that the slain Lamb is noticed by the seer, detected and celebrated by the four living creatures, discerned and praised by the twenty-four elders and remarked and uplifted by all the angels.

¹³⁵ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Rev. 5:11). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

Hence, what first caught John's attention becomes the reason, in fact, the principal ground for the adoration of the Lamb. It is as if John was being told that what you have just seen [the Lamb, looking as though slain] should neither traumatise nor disturb you, but it should motivate you to worship him. This is also likely John's message to his readers.

As discussed, the lexeme σφάζω fits into the Revelation depiction of Jesus, as the long hoped for and expected king under the imagery and titles of Son of God, Son of Man, Christ, Lion of Judah, the Root and the Offspring of David. Their hopes are materialised and fulfilled perfectly in the slain Lamb. The lexeme σφάζω, as applied to Lamb Christology, serves John's purpose of bringing home all the messianic expectations in a better way. Further, it has been established that in the LXX, it is the lexeme σφάζω, which is used for ritual (cf. Leviticus). The Revelation Lamb is slain to fulfil the Pascal Lamb and to facilitate the new exodus of the new people of God (5:8) who will sing a new song (5:9). As far as the exodus motif is concerned, none of those above messianic appellations would fit well as compared to the way the imagery of the slaughtered Lamb would.

Thus, it is noteworthy that the adoration of Jesus in Revelation is *basically* because he was slain, "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals *because* you were slain (ἐσφαγῆς)..." (5:8), the worthy Lamb is no other, but the one who was slain, "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain" (5:12). It is in the second section of Revelation (4– 7) where the worship of Jesus is indeed introduced. They worship him not in terms of him being the Root of David or the Son of God, but in terms of him being the Lamb, who was slaughtered.

Lament is a response to trauma, but not so much what is expected of God's people in Revelation. The entrance of the Lamb on the scene (5:6), appearing as slain, is neither lamentable nor aimed at making the seer or his readers distraught. It is not a subject of weeping. When John *wept*, he did so because there was no one to take the scroll and to open its seals, "*I wept and wept* because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside" not because the Lamb appeared as slaughtered (5:4). Further, the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained "wept," cried out and called out in a loud voice for justice, "*They cried out with a loud voice, "O Sovereign Lord, holy*

and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth? (6:10).¹³⁶ So, neither John nor the martyrs cried and wept because of the slaughtering of the Lamb or because the Lamb was looking as slain.

In Revelation, the slaughter of the Lamb is not a subject of, nor an expression of grief. No matter how horrible the lexeme σφάζω connotes, it is never meant to hurt and traumatise the readers in Revelation. For the slaughter of the Lamb is *the* backdrop for the worship of Jesus in Revelation. This is because the redemption, formation, and establishment of God's kingdom and the future assurance of reigning on earth are all the by-product of the fact that Jesus, the Lamb of God was slain, "because you were slain" ἔσφαγης (5:9-10).

That the Lamb is *standing at* the centre of the throne (5:6) implies that he had *risen from* the dead and is alive, and the destiny of the cosmos revolves around him "I am the Living One; I was *dead*, and now look I am *alive* forever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades" (1:18). Here both the death and resurrection of Christ are highlighted. The death and resurrection of Christ are once again depicted in his introduction to the Church of Smyrna, "... these are the words of whom who is the First and the Last *who died and came to life again*" (2:8). Remarkably, coming to the worship of Jesus in the second section of Revelation, all the three hymns of worship (5:9-10; 12; 13) are centred only on the reality of Jesus being the one who was slaughtered [Jesus' death]. The worship of Jesus is focused solely on his death. It is, therefore, fascinating that the resurrection of Jesus, no matter how important it is, in the Revelation Christology, does not feature in the celebration and worship of the Lamb and precisely in these anthems.

Hence, the researcher's thesis stands, and it is that in Revelation σφάζω functions as the most significant identity marker, first of Jesus as the slain Lamb (5:12), and then of his followers as "those who had been slain" (6:9). Moreover, the chorus of 5:12 could somewhat still make sense, even if the words "who was slain" were omitted, and 13:8 could also relatively again make sense, even if the words "*the Lamb who was slain* from the beginning of the world" were excluded. But not so much in John's Christology.

¹³⁶ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Rev. 6:10). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

Hence, it is noteworthy that whenever John talks about the Lamb; he wants his readers to take it seriously that he is not merely talking about the Lamb, but One *who was slain*. This is emphatic regarding Christ's identity. It is, therefore, more likely that John wants the "who was slain" to keep resonating in the minds of his readers whenever they read and think of the Messiah as the Lamb. All the twenty-eight ($4 \times 7 = 28$) occurrences of the word "Lamb" referring to Jesus in Revelation should evoke this truth. For the four times (4x) John uses σφάζω to describe the Lamb is enough to multiply them seven times (4×7) to get the 28x the word Lamb is used in Revelation in the portrayal of Jesus.

It has been observed by many scholars that John consistently uses three classes of numbers—triangular, square and rectangular numbers—to picture the beast, God's people and the period of the Church witness alongside her persecution from the beast (cf. Bauckham, 1993:384-407; Paul, 2018:34-9). Like the blood of Jesus which is given prominence in that it occurs at the beginning of the book in 1:5 (Decock 2004:161), σφάζω concerning Christ is given prominence in that it happens in the second section of the book with the Christ in view (5:6, 9, 12).

Further, the fourfold use of the blood of Jesus (1:5; 5:9; 7:14; 12:11) corresponds with the quadruple use the σφάζω with the Lamb in view (5:6; 9; 12; 13:8). This fourfold purpose of the lexeme σφάζω on the Lamb seems significant in Revelation, which is full of symbolic numbers. Decock (2004:161) points out that "[i]t is striking, first, that the blood of Jesus is mentioned four times in the book. Four is the number of the world and seems to show the worldwide effect of Jesus' blood." Four (4) is a square number, and it is often understood as symbolising the earth.

Seiss (1987:60) points out that "four is the worldly number." To substantiate his point, Seiss (1987:60) highlights that "the whole world revolves itself around four elements, namely fire, air, earth and water. The points of the compass are four, i.e. north, east, south, and west. There are four winds, four major divisions of the earth. The great world-powers of history are four..." He then concludes that there is, therefore, no mistaking of this number [four] since to the Oriental philosophers, four is always the figure of the universe (Seiss, 1987:60).

Besides, four (4) is likewise a square of two (2), and 2 is the number used to depict the 2 witnesses as the symbol of the whole Church in Rev. 11. In numbering them as two (2), the emphasis is that their witness is accurate and reliable (cf. Deut. 17:6; 19:15). Like 144, four (4) is a square number having a connotation of the “things of God,” particularly the people of God (cf. Bauckham, 1993). It also is a number symbolising the earth in its universality. Therefore, putting all these ideas together, John applies the lexeme σφάζω four times (4x) to the Lamb to show the universal scope of the redeeming work of Christ—the death or the slaughtering of Jesus through which he redeemed people from all the four (4) corners of *the earth*. In fact, in 14:3 the 144, 000 are described as those who have been *redeemed from the earth*.

That 4 is a square of 2 fits well to designate the role of the Church as witnesses on earth. The number 7 is a symbol of completion, totality or perfection. In this context, it shows the completed redeeming work of the slaughtered Lamb as a perfect sacrifice for sin (1:5, 5:9). The reader is always expected to see the fact that Jesus dreadfully died to ransom people and establish God’s kingdom on earth whenever they see or read Lamb (4x7) depicting Jesus as the Messiah.

It is worth it to note that so far; it is difficult to substantiate the above submission, for there are neither compelling nor substantial arguments whether John, the writer of the Apocalypse envisioned the *fourfold* use of the lexeme σφάζω applied to the Lamb in Revelation to be understood in the way this researcher has elaborated above. Nevertheless, as speculative as it may sound, the explanation seems to fit well with the consistency of John’s use of numbers in Revelation.

Commenting on Rev. 4-5, Gorman (2011:103) rightly contends that “the record of John’s experience introduces two images that *dominate the* rest of the book: the throne of God and the Lamb of God” [my italics]. Each time John uses the word Lamb to denote Jesus, he intends his readers to envision him as the Lamb who was slain even though he is alive. Therefore, in this sense, the Lamb is not just one of the two images that dominate the rest of the book of Revelation, but the “being slain” *stands out in* the whole Christology of Revelation.

The violent death of Jesus is more central to the theology of Revelation than any other aspect of his identity. For it is through his brutal death painted in the lexeme σφάζω, that Jesus accomplishes his fundamental role—setting up God’s kingdom. For this reason, Gorman (2011:103) is right as he argues that “together these images [the throne of God and the Lamb of God] constitute the hermeneutical, or interpretive key to the entire book.” He (2011:103) correctly points out that “they [the throne of God and the Lamb of God] reveal in pictures the essential theology of the book of Revelation.” Thus, the marks of slaughter upon the Lamb are not to be perceived as a stigma, but as an essential part of who Jesus has become and will always be. He is the Lamb who was slain, and he is alive forever with the slaughtering marks.

4.10.4. The analysis of Rev 5

The scene of Rev. 5 is an apocalyptic vision, but well wrapped up in a narrative framework. Like any narrative, it describes the events of the vision in sequence, and there are no specific instructions given to the reader—the vision is nonprescriptive. In this vision, the area of tension is characterised as something *undesirable* in the form of a need or distress to be resolved, “who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?” This question highlights a pressing need to be met. That “no one in heaven, on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it” (v. 7), shows that it is something impossible. This is distressful to the seer in particular, and his readers. In this narrative, this unwanted “impossible” thing ought to be resolved.

Hence, the narrative scene of Rev. 5 falls in the category of a *problem-resolution* structure as a plot. Thus, the vision begins by laying out the scene (v. 1). And so, it announces the tension, i.e. the predicament or the problem of the vision (vv. 2-4). On this, Phillips (2017:188) points out that “[t]he appearing of the scroll raised an immediate problem, however. John saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, ‘who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals’ (Rev. 5:2).” Next, the vision displays some resolving incidents which move the story of the vision in the resolution’s direction of the predicament (vv. 5-7). In the last stage, the vision presents to the reader the outcome—events which occur as an upshot of the settlement of the predicament (vv. 8-14).

4.10.5. A table of the plot structure of Rev 5

Setting (v. 1)	The scene is set with the introduction of a prominent figure sitting on the throne, having a scroll in his right hand. The scroll had writings on both sides and sealed with seven stamps.
Predicament (vv. 2-4)	Then, <i>the tension</i> of the vision is announced in the sense that John wept for there was no one to open the scroll even to look inside—καὶ οὐδεὶς ἐδύνατο ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ οὐδὲ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς οὐδὲ ὑποκάτω τῆς γῆς ἀνοῖξαι τὸ βιβλίον οὔτε βλέπειν αὐτό. The scroll was to be spread out.
Resolution (vv. 5-7)	Next, v.6 stands as a “ <i>complication</i> ” to the resolution of the problem of this vision—the Lamb standing as though slain—...ἀρνίον ἐστηκὸς ὡς ἐσφαγμένον. It is meant to raise another “tension” when, in fact, it is the very piece that resolves the predicament of this vision. The tension is finally solved when the Lamb went and held the roll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne (v. 7).
Outcome (vv. 8-14)	The resolution of the tension has a fourfold outcome with one common element —hymn devoted to the worship of the Son of God: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) The four living creatures and the 24 elders fall before the Lamb and worship him with a new song (vv.8-10).2) The unnumbered group of angelic being encircled the throne and sang a song of worship to the Lamb (vv. 11-12).3) Every creature in heaven, on earth, under the earth, and in the sea join and sing a song to Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb (v.13).4) The 4 living creatures and 24 elders agree to the son the song of every living creature, saying amen as they fall and worship (v.14)

Table # 4

Now, sticking to the above-mentioned *problem-resolution plot* structure of the telling of the vision of Rev. 5, one can see that the events of v. 5 and v. 6 are directly resolving incidents. It implies that these events which are described in these two verses (vv. 5-6) move the story of the vision in the direction of the resolution of the problem. These events do not in themselves resolve the predicament of the vision since so far, the scroll is not yet taken from the right hand of Him who sat on the throne, and its seals are not even broken. Unless they find a qualified and

trustworthy figure, the scroll be taken, and its seals opened, we cannot claim that the predicament of this narrative has been resolved.

Strictly, the event of v. 6 is more of a *complication* to the predicament of the vision than a resolving incident. Phillips is right to describe the phenomenon of v.6 as “more dramatic” (2017:190). For Phillips (2017:190), this detail was not just dramatic but also astonishing to John. This is true especially to the seer and his readers being people who have been raised in the Davidic and messianic traditions. From the seer and the reader’s perspective, the disclosure of v. 5, “... Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals”¹³⁷ stands out as a visible resolving incident to the predicament of this vision than the details of v. 6.

The event of v. 5 could thus bring more excitement to the seer and his readers than the surprising information of v. 6. Yet, the facts of v. 6, particularly the one that introduces the one who is worthy to take the scroll and open the seals as the Lamb, *looking as though slain* (ἐσφαγμένον), is here to create a “new problem” or a “new tension” to be resolved, at least in the mind and from the perspective of the seer. This issue is likely meant to create further tension and leave the seer in suspense. For how on earth, could the *slaughtered Lamb* solve my predicament? John might have been mesmerised *before* he sees the Lamb going and taking “the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne” (v. 7).¹³⁸ The play of Lion and Lamb imageries are not meant as some scholars have argued (cf. Phillips) to see the combination of virtues derived from these imageries in the person of Christ. Phillips (2017:191) [and many other scholars] thinks of the strength and dominance found in Lion imagery joint to the humility and servanthood found in the Lamb imageries all finding balance in Christ.

However, the lion imagery has much to do with the messianic expectations, and yet the lamb imagery has got much to do with *the surprising way* through which those expectations have been fulfilled. Hence, presenting the solution of the tension of the vision in ‘slain Lamb terms’ is brought on purpose to create more tension in the resolution of the problem of v. 2.

¹³⁷ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Rev. 5:5). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

¹³⁸ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Rev. 5:7). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

Therefore, (1) the event depicted as the “complication” of the vision in v. 6, (2) the resolution of the predicament in v. 7, and (3) the fourfold outcome, i.e. events which are resulting in the resolution of the problem found in vv. 8-14 help the readers to form their conclusion about the message and the significance of the vision. Thus, these three points unlock the function of the vision of chapter 5.

One has to carefully read the specific *outcome* of the resolution to the predicament to detect the significance of the rest of the vision. The resolution found in 5:7 has a fourfold outcome with a common element of a song of worship addressed to the Lamb. The first facet of this outcome is *the falling down before the Lamb* of the four living creatures and the elders and *their singing of a new song dedicated* to the slain Lamb (vv.8-10). The second aspect of the outcome is the *encircling* of the throne by the unnumbered angels and their *singing of a song of worship* dedicated to the slain Lamb (vv.11-12). The third aspect is the joining of every creature in heaven, on earth, under the earth and in the sea with singing a song dedicated to Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb (v.13). The final piece is the agreement of the four living creatures and the elders, again, to the song of every creature in *saying amen and falling down and worshipping* (v.14).

Having this fourfold outcome in mind, John wants his readers to infer that what could previously be understood from the readers’ perspective as a complication—the Lamb, looking as though slain—to the predicament of the visual modality is really, and the very key to the solution of the problem. The Lamb, looking as though slain, is *the* missing puzzle to resolving the whole plight of not only this vision but of the entire book. Through the lens of this vision and looking at the fourfold outcome of the vision, John wants his readers to grasp that the traumatic experience of the Lamb painted in the lexeme σφάζω motivates and inspires the worship of Jesus because everything they benefit as followers of the Slain Lamb generates from that fact. The traumatising embedded in the lexeme σφάζω as applied to the Lamb has, therefore, been powerfully transformed into songs of worship dedicated to the very Lamb who was slain.

DeSilva (2009:194) highlights the feelings of awe and gratitude which John puts forward in the vision of Rev. 4-5. This researcher, as already stated in the introductory chapter of this study, does not agree with some recent scholarship

which completely ignores the persecution of Christians as one of the key elements at the backdrop of Revelation. Though DeSilva is one proponent of such readings, this researcher agrees with him as he (2009:194) contends that “Christians in Asia Minor were exposed to many influences that sought to arouse feelings of awe and gratitude toward Rome and its emperors.”

Besides the persecution against Christians which took place before the composition of Revelation, that which was sporadically taking place during the time of Domitian (81AD), and that which John was envisioning, the imperial cults and the Greco-Roman cultures were also significant players in the Revelation background. Using the socio-rhetorical approach to Revelation, DeSilva (2009:194), rightly argues that in the vision of Rev. 4-5, John seeks to displace the feelings of awe and gratitude towards Rome and its emperors. Also, DeSilva (2009:196) asserts that “the experience of awe is layered with evocations of awe and gratitude towards God and the Lamb.” It is accurate, as DeSilva (2009:197) points out that “rendering an important service to people in significant need is the basic condition for the evocation of gratitude.”

For the reason above, the focus of Rev. 4-5 and mainly Rev. 5, is according to DeSilva (2009:197), to stimulate feelings of awe and gratitude in the reader based on the critical service the Lamb has rendered to the people by *redeeming* and *ransoming* (these terms suggest a situation of significant distress) them.

Though this researcher does not reject DeSilva’s submission on this, the first piece which stands out in Rev. 5 is, however, not so much the outstanding service rendered by the Lamb, but the *means* through which that service has been achieved—by being slaughtered (through a terrible death). This is clarified by the “ὅτι” (because) in 5:9 which introduces ἐσφαγῆς (you were slain) first before bringing in the “καὶ ἠγορασας τῷ θεῷ ἐν τῷ αἵματι σου ἐκ πάσης φυλῆς καὶ γλώσσης καὶ λαοῦ καὶ ἔθνους (and with your blood you purchased for God etc.).

Therefore, the feelings of awe and gratitude towards the Lamb are primarily expected to be based on the fact that he was *slaughtered* (5:9), and everything else that follows is a by-product of that fact. This is significant, especially when having the persecution and the slaughtering of the community of believers in view. For by

zooming in on the slaughtering of the Lamb thrice in Rev. 5 John is transforming what is traumatic—looking as though slain (ἐσφαγμένον)—into a potent tool of comfort and therapy, which calls forth feelings of reverence and gratitude, eventually ushering them into the adoration of Christ.

To recapitulate this section, it has been demonstrated that the lexeme σφάζω is applied to Jesus as the Lamb thrice (3x) in the second subdivision of Revelation (4–7).¹³⁹ It is used one more time (1x), again for the Lamb, in the fourth section (12–14). These two sections, i.e. 4–7 & 12–14, have several common themes which set the Lamb and the beast in parallel. It is so because, in 12–14, the beast is set up as a parody of the Lamb. In these sections [4–7 & 12–14], both the Lamb and the beast are introduced and brought on the scene in a standardised manner, “then I saw the Lamb” (5:6); “and I saw a beast” (13:1). The parallel in “similarities” between the Lamb and the beast will be dealt with in-depth in the sixth chapter of this study—*The Therionological Dimension of the Lexeme Σφάζω In Revelation*. All the same, in this section, the researcher is concerned with the reference of the Lamb in 13:8 with the emphasis on its portrayal as being slaughtered.

4.10.6. Analysis of Rev 13:8.

Rev. 13 has different ways of describing the beast’s worshippers, namely, “the whole world” (v. 3); “people” (v. 4); “all the earth-dwellers” (13:8, 12, 14); or “all people, great and small, rich and poor, free and slave” (v. 16). These “earth-dwellers” are in abrupt contrast with God’s holy people of v. 7.

What does the phrase “earth-dwellers” mean? John anticipated this question; hence, his answer in this context is that it is “*everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain*” (v. 8) [my italics].¹⁴⁰ The next anticipated question is “which Lamb?” John’s precision on that is “the *Lamb who was slain* from the foundation of the world” (v. 8) [my italics]. For John, the only and single way he could be precise in describing the Lamb is to depict him primarily or solely as the *Lamb who was slain*. The “being slain” is the best manner of identifying the Lamb in Revelation. It is a fundamental part of

¹³⁹ It is worthwhile to point out that “[n]owhere within the text of Revelation is the lamb explicitly identified with the figure of Jesus (itself remarkable), but there is no doubting the identification from both the theological and textual parallels” (Paul, 2018:134).

¹⁴⁰ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Re 13:8). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

Jesus' identity, because "[i]t is as the slain Lamb that Christ brings salvation" (Morris, 1987:164).

Of course, the Lamb has seven horns and seven eyes (5:6), but above all, for John, he is the Lamb who was slain (5:6, 9, 12). Of course, the Revelation Lamb is standing at the centre of the throne and encircled by the four living creatures and the elders, but more than that, for John, He is the Lamb who was slain (5:6, 9, 12; 13:8).

The phrase "before (or since) the foundation of the universe" ἀπὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου 13:8 is contentious. Unlike in 17:8, the phrase is a bit ambiguous in 13:8. Using 17:8 to clear the "ambiguity" of the phrase as it used in 13:8 would be making a big exegetical jump. Two significant readings have since been proposed by scholars (cf. Smalley, 2005:343). On the one hand, the phrase could be modifying the "all whose names have not been written in the Lamb's book of life." Hendriksen (2007:147), Phillips (2017:371-72), Beckwith (1967:638), Caird (1984:49-50) and Aune (1997:746-47) are among the proponents of this reading. Hence, for them, the translation would agree with the NRSV, "[a]ll whose names have not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life belonging to the Lamb who was slain." The phrase, on the other hand could also be modifying the "of the Lamb who was slain" τοῦ ἀρνίου τοῦ ἐσφαγμένου. Hence, the translation would go with the NIV "all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain before the foundation of the world."¹⁴¹ Fee (2011:183) is one of those who advocate this reading.

Most advocates of the former reading find it hard to work with the latter interpretation based on what some of them claim to be theological, logical and grammatical grounds of the text (cf. Smalley, 2005:343). For them, it is theologically hard to show that Jesus Christ was slain from (or before) the foundation of the world, even though this appears to be the most likely and natural reading of the text. It is noteworthy that our theology should neither be the basic framework nor the starting point in trying to make sense of biblical texts. This is because our theology could be incorrect. Besides, just because the connection of the phrase ἀπὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου to ἐσφαγμένου does not sit well with what seems to be our theology, does not mean this is not what John could have had in mind.

¹⁴¹ Holy Bible: New International Version. (1985). (Rev. 13:8). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan

Therefore, given the word order of the text as Smalley (2005:343) points out, “it seems natural to connect the phrase ἀπὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου with the immediately preceding participial adjective, ἐσφαγμένου.”

The latter reading is neither theologically wrong nor grammatically incorrect. Withal, merely reading this suggests the truth, which agrees with Scripture that the death of Christ was never an afterthought. Jesus is the slain Lamb of God in God’s eternal decrees (cf. Acts 2:23; 2 Pet. 1:18-20). This reading can also be reinforced by the theological passive of the lexeme σφάζω, i.e. ἐσφαγμένου in the sense that God in his eternal past stands as the agent of the slaughter of his son for the redemption of his creation. Thus, what we find at 17:8, is, another parallel truth that the names of the earth-dwellers have not been written in the book of life from the creation of the world.

Remarkably, in 5:9, 12 and 13:8 John identifies the Lamb far less with his resurrection than he does with his traumatic death. Wright (2003:476) might be accurate as he asserts that the resurrection completely soaks the theology of Revelation, even though there are few words to designate resurrection. Wright’s claim can only be valid in so far as the motif of the resurrection is concerned—the resurrection of the Messiah, the first and the final resurrection. Besides, Wright’s weakness is that the vast majority of the texts (7:14-17; 11:1-13; 20:5-6; 20:12-13) he uses to arrive at his conclusion that the resurrection soaks the theology of Revelation are focused not so much on the resurrection of Christ but of the people of God and the rest of mankind (2003:470-6). The resurrection is mostly implied than explicitly stated as compared to the theology of Christ’s death.

Revelation identifies Jesus more with his death than with his resurrection. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is implied in 1:5, 18 and 2:8. Yet, for John, it is the death of Christ, his brutal crucifixion which is foundational and a ground for real life and meaning.

Further, the book of *life* is strongly associated with the *slaughtered Lamb*, “the Lamb’s book of life, the Lamb who was slain...” (13:8) than it does with Christ’s resurrection. Here, again, we see a powerful transformation of a “stigma” and a “traumatization” into life. The apposition of the book of life and the slaughter of the

Lamb is significant. Thus, the true meaning of life happens only when the Father slays Jesus as the Lamb. The Book of Life can only be the Book of Life because the One who has been slain has given his own life [blood] to ransom and forgive many (1:6; 5:9-10). This book of life belongs to no other than the slain Lamb. The followers of the beast (they *followed* the beast cf. 13:3) have no life as far as its real quality is concerned because their names have not been written in the Lamb's Book of Life. Life is something people get on the ground that Jesus was slain. For it is by his blood [life] that a community of people was freed from sin (1:5). Jesus' cruel death depicted in the lexeme σφάζω must not be divorced from the fact that he has the record of life. The lexeme σφάζω in Revelation, therefore, functions as an identity marker for both the Lamb and its intended readers, i.e. the community of believers within a context of suffering.

4.10.7. Final thoughts.

For the above reasons, in Rev. 5, the negative undertones loaded in the lexeme σφάζω are powerfully transformed into a connotation of life and powerful anthems of adoration of Jesus. By this John wants his readers to perceive that everything, including their suffering, even the slaughter of Antipas (cf. 2:10, 13) can only make sense, because of the slaughtering of the Lamb. Therefore, rather than being traumatised and shocked because the Lamb is looking as though slain, John is asking his readers that they should instead fall down before the Lamb and sing a *new song* of worship to him (cf. 5:9).

Talking of the 'new song,' we must point out that this song is to the slain Lamb. "It is called a 'new song' because that which Christ has accomplished is wholly different and superior to the Old Covenant; nothing like it has ever existed before" argues Coleman (1980:47). Like the "old" song (cf. Ex. 15: 1–21), the new song is a song of redemption. Yet, unlike the "old" song sung by *one* nation, i.e. Israel, the new song is sung by a community of believers symbolised in the 24 elders from *every tribe, and language, and people and nation*.¹⁴² Paul (2018:136) rightly contends that "[i]f God's

¹⁴² Morris (1987:99-100) helpfully writes "[t]hey sang a new song (cf. 14:3; Ps. 33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 144:9; 149:1; Isa. 42:10). The word *ōdē* is 'the general word for a song, whether accompanied or unaccompanied, whether of praise or on any other subject'. In the New Testament, however, it is always used of sacred song. The word *new* has a way of recurring in Revelation. It applies to the new name (2:17; 3:12), to the New Jerusalem (3:12; 21:2), to the new heaven and the new earth (21:1), and finally there is the resounding declaration that God makes all things new (21:5). In so far as the Greek term *kainos* can be differentiated

saving action has been redefined in the sacrifice of the Lamb, the extent of God's people has also been redefined." This community comprises the redeemed of the Lamb, who was slain. We anticipated this new song in some Psalms of missions such as Ps. 96.

Therefore, a trauma in all its horrible aspects embedded in the lexeme σφάζω is transformed into a joyful song. Trauma is transformed into the worship of the Lamb. The main subject of the hymns is the Lamb and that he was slain. The songs of worship are dedicated to Jesus presented neither as the Root of David nor the Lion of Judah, but rather devoted to him introduced as no other than the Lamb who was slaughtered. This, again, is so because by being slain, the Lamb fulfils all the messianic hopes as they are presented in the imagery of the Root of David and the Lion of Judah. It is therefore worth noting that

This combination of images [the throne of God and the Lamb of God] creates two mind-boggling paradoxes. The first is that God shares sovereignty and honour, expressed in the receiving of worship, with the Messiah Jesus. The second is that this Jesus, who is worthy of worship, has exercised his *messianic office* and power *by* being slaughtered (Gorman, 2011: 103) [my italics].

4.11. CONCLUSION.

In conclusion, let us begin by asserting that we have mentioned in this chapter that at the core of the Revelation's Christology, Jesus Christ is primarily presented in kingship connotations. Though it is understandable that the Christ of Revelation is Divine and shares the same titles with God the Father (cf. 1:8; 17), the writer introduces him in the first place as the King of God's kingdom in human terms. The vast majority of the titles given to Jesus in Revelation suggest and echo the Old Testament Messianic expectations. Hence, it has been proven that when Jesus is designated as the Christ (ὁ Χριστός) in Revelation is to suggest that he is the human

from the other word for new, *neos* (which does not occur in Revelation), it signifies 'fresh' as opposed to 'recent'. It is concerned with quality rather than date. The use of the term here raises the intriguing question of what is meant by a 'new' song in heaven. Are songs renewed there from time to time? This particular song arises from the opening of the seals as its first words show. The Lamb's saving word has created a new situation and this elicits a new outburst of praise. No song meant for another situation quite fits this. So, the song is new."

King, whose role is to build God's kingdom. Hence, kingdom ideas are invariably connected to the mission and identity of Christ, the Messiah in Revelation.

Likewise, it has also been held that when Revelation uses the language of "Son of Man" (ὄμοιον υἱὸν ἀνθρώπου) to label Jesus is to make its readers think of the Son of Man as he is shown in the book of Dn. 7:13-18 and not as the term is used elsewhere in the Old Testament corpus. One reason this is true is the juxtaposition of the concept of the Son of Man and the ideas that Jesus comes with the cloud in Rev. 1:7, 13. A careful reader of Daniel will see that this apposition in Revelation echoes Dn. 7:13-18. The other reason is that the Son of Man in Daniel is Divine and has the mission of receiving the everlasting kingdom from the Ancient of Days and is worthy of worship like the Apocalypse's Son of Man. The one who is identified as the Son of Man at Rev. 1:13 is the one who introduces himself as the Son of God (ὁ υἱὸς θεοῦ) in 2:18—he is God and man. Therefore, the appellation Son of Man (ὄμοιον υἱὸν ἀνθρώπου), like the title Christ (ὁ Χριστός) is linked to the kingship of Jesus and his mission of setting up his eternal kingdom.

The researcher shows the same point again and again in looking at Jesus' other appellations in Revelation such as the Son of God, ὁ υἱὸς θεοῦ (2:8), the Lion of Judah, ὁ λεων ὁ ἐκ τῆς φυλῆς Ἰούδα (5:5), the Root and the Offspring of David, ἡ ῥίζα καὶ τὸ γένος Δαυῖδ (5:5, 22:6), the faithful witness, ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστὸς καὶ [ὁ] ἀληθινός (3:14), and the Ruler of the kings of earth, ὁ ἄρχων τῶν βασιλέων τῆς γῆς (1:5). In Revelation, all these Christological designations intend to reinforce the fact that Christ is the long-awaited Messiah and has the central role of founding and ruling over a kingdom that will endure forever.

If the above designations drive home that Jesus is the King, the long-awaited Messiah who was to bring about all the hopes of the new age, the researcher has argued that the Slain Lamb imagery, on the other hand, plays a different vital but complementary purpose in all the aforementioned designations—it establishes *the means* by which the Old Testament Messianic expectations were to be executed and realized. The researcher has demonstrated that without the slaughtering of the Lamb, which is deliberately embedded in a loaded lexeme σφάζω, there would be no fulfilment of God's eschatological age.

The action of the King of God's people being slain as painted in the lexeme σφάζω was not merely a way through which God would bring about his purpose. However, it was *the* only means of fulfilling God's divine plan for his people. For this reason, we established that the Slaughterer of the Son was the Father, as John always uses the theological passive of the lexeme σφάζω on the Lamb. The slaughtering of the Lamb was not an afterthought, but God's eternal plan as it is written that the Lamb was slaughtered before the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8).

By being murdered the Lamb has not only established a kingdom but has also purchased a people from all nations and made them kings and priests to serve his Father and to reign on earth (1:6; 5:9-10). So, for this cause, as already pointed out, the immense majority of Christological titles assigned to Jesus in Revelation points to his identity as king and his mission as the setting up of God's realm.

The Slain Lamb metaphor is at the core of the Christology of Revelation. For it points at the best and only surprising way through which the role and mission of the Messiah are to be realised. On this Goldsworthy (1984:23) argues that "through his suffering and death, the Lamb is the revealer of God." Therefore, it has also been discussed that the slaughter has become an integral part of Jesus' identity. Though the lexeme σφάζω is used only four times (4x) for the Lamb imagery, the writer intended to make the reader always see the slaughtering marks as a part of who Jesus has become, and who he will always be whenever the word Lamb appears in Revelation in the depiction of Jesus. For this reason, the researcher has argued that the lexeme σφάζω was not meant to traumatise the readers, but to cause them to worship Christ looking at its resulting benefits. His slaughter should be accepted and embraced by the community of believers not as an afterthought, but as the fundamental piece of God's plan concerning who his beloved Son would and always be—the slain Lamb.

CHAPTER 5: HOW THE LEXEME ΣΦΆΖΩ FITS INTO REVELATION'S DEPICTION OF THE CHURCH (ECCLESIOLOGY)

5.1. INTRODUCTION.

The preceding chapter focused on the depiction of the lexeme σφάζω in Revelation's Christology. We concluded that the lexeme σφάζω is the sine qua non and central to the description of Christ's identity and mission in Revelation. The traumatising, which is naturally loaded and connoted in the lexeme σφάζω, is theologically transformed into a powerful therapeutic tool for the Church in Revelation's Christology. The fact that the Son of God (ὁ υἱὸς θεοῦ) is presented as the slain Lamb since he is also the Son of Man (ὁ υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου) is neither a subject of grief nor a question of lament but rather a subject of great joy and worship for the people of God. They craft this worship into powerful choruses. These songs are carolled by the community of believers and angelic beings. They dedicate the worship to the Second Person of the Trinity, Jesus, the Son of God (Rev. 5).

We also established that the lexeme σφάζω in its Christological dimension has paradoxically an undertone of life (cf. Rev. 13:8). This is because the book of life is strictly and exclusively associated with the slaughtering [death] of the Lamb. Remarkably, in Revelation, the Christian response to traumatising is, thus, not resistance be it violent or non-violent, but rather acceptance. The theology behind the lexeme σφάζω is accepted and embraced as a substantial transformative phenomenon of who they [the community of faith] have become by following the slain Lamb. The appeal to the latter response is because traumatising defines Christ's identity and that of his followers. In Revelation, whoever the Son of God is and whatever he has done is well presented because he is the slain Lamb.

Having elaborated on the place and the role of the lexeme σφάζω in the Christology of Revelation, and having also indicated that Christology informs ecclesiology in Johannine theology, the current chapter will, therefore, investigate how the lexeme σφάζω fits into the Revelation's depiction of the Church (ecclesiology). To accomplish this, the researcher will identify some critical descriptions of the community of believers in Revelation, especially those which are closely related to the lexeme σφάζω. Hence, it will be pointed out that Revelation highlights the fact

that the community of believers is (1) the Church, (2) God's people; (3) God's servants; (4) holy apostolic and prophetic community; (5) a being slaughtered community. Besides, to arrive at the punchline of this chapter, the researcher will also highlight the fact that the blood of the saints will be avenged for, while Christ's will not. Next, the three occurrences of the lexeme σφάζω in view with the church will be thoroughly examined. There is a close relationship between the theme of the testimony of Jesus and the slaughtering of the saints. We will tackle each one of all these critical points.

The researcher will use, as stated in the first chapter of this work, a narrative approach to describe the ecclesiology of Revelation.

Now, it is, again, essential to point out that this is not the place for an exhaustive ecclesiology of Revelation. The researcher's area of interest is to particularise the place and the role of the lexeme σφάζω in the identity and mission of the community of believers in the Apocalypse of John. So, the researcher will explore how the community of believers is designated in Revelation, how the lexeme σφάζω fits into that description and what is the significance of such an explanation in suffering.

5.2. THE COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS IS THE CHURCH.

In this section, the researcher aims at demonstrating that the term "church" (ἐκκλησία) is a designation of the community of believers in the first section of Revelation. Also, the term "church" (ἐκκλησία) had political and military undertones in the Greco-Roman world (cf. Winter, 2001:134). This designation could have evoked suspicious sentiments, which could have resulted in the community being persecuted by the Roman citizen and officials. Observing on the term "church" Winter (2001:134) points out that "because in pagan religion a corporate meeting of adherents was not something that was normally associated with cultic practices, Roman citizens in Corinth may have been puzzled with a 'religion' that had such a regular 'meeting' (ἐκκλησία) as its essential characteristics." The perception of the Roman citizen on the assemblies of the community of believers might have been one trigger of conflict and persecution of the followers of the Lamb. Even the term "Christians" which might have been coined by Latin speakers had political and military undertones (cf. Winter, 2001: 134).

These terms (ἐκκλησία and χριστιανοί) anticipated the persecution and the slaughter of members of this community. Winter (2001:135) rightly argues that “if ‘Christians’ was a somewhat derisory designation, then their meetings could only be viewed with a measure of curiosity at best and suspicion at worst.”¹⁴³

This community, which is described as (ἐκκλησία) has a fundamental role in bearing and holding the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. It is their faithfulness in their witnessing, which will eventually lead to their slaughter. The slaughter of the Church was and is, therefore, inevitable.

The original readers of Revelation are four times (4x) identified as *seven churches* in the first section (1-3) of Revelation (1:4, 11, 20). We have already established in the previous chapter that four (4) is the symbolic number of the world. Now, two things should be highlighted here. First, as a square of two (2), and in connection with the concept Church, four (4) as a figure is most likely here [seven churches, 4x] to indicate that the members of this community have been purchased from all four (4) corners of the earth—from every tribe and language, and people and nations (5:9 cf. 1:5). Second, the figure two (2) [4 as a square of 2] is probably here to connote the fact they have assigned the Church with a significant role of serving God (cf. 1:1, 6; 5:10) with a *reliable testimony* to the four (4) corners of the world (cf. Deut. 17:6; 19:15).

This reading may seem speculative and Midrashic, but still, it somewhat agrees with John’s use of numbers in Revelation. For instance, it follows how John metaphorically uses the two (2) witnesses/prophets in Rev. 11 to portray the *whole Church* as a robust prophetic community throughout the ages. Referring to Luke 10:1, Hendriksen (2007:129-30) argues that the two (2) witnesses of Rev. 11 denote the missionary task of the Church. He (2007:30) then contends, “The Church is a mighty missionary organization which will complete their testimony despite suffering and persecution on earth.”

¹⁴³ According to Paul (2018:69, 70) “The *seven churches*, already mentioned in 1:4, are now listed. ‘Church’ is not the best translation of the word *ekklēsia*, since it has institutional and organizational overtones that are not present for John and his readers. The term is used in the Greek Old Testament (the Septuagint) for the ‘congregation of Israel’, meaning God’s people gathered, as well as referring to the gathering of the citizens in Greek culture in order to make decisions about the running of the city—so ‘assembly’ is perhaps a better term.”

Still, on the use of the number seven (7) concerning Revelation's ecclesiology, Smalley (2005:31) points out that "[i]f 'seven' connotes completeness in this context, the heptad of churches enumerated here may be representative of churches in the area." Further, the word 'church,' (ἐκκλησία) in singular occurs seven times (7x) in address to each of the seven (7) churches (2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14) of the area, and 'churches' in plural without the modifying number seven (7) is also mentioned seven times (7x) referring to either the other seven (7) churches of Asia Minor or solely to the Church of Christ throughout the ages (2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22).

The word(s) 'church' or 'churches' or even 'seven churches' come out only in this section (1-3) of Revelation. From Rev. 4 onwards, John uses terms other than "church" to depict the community of believers. That the term church occurs only in the first section of Revelation does not agree with the so-called "rapture theology" as advocated by the dispensationalists. Beale (1999:319) partly agrees with this view, stating that "Therefore, there is little basis for seeing "come up here" in 4:1 and John's spiritual rapture in v.2 as symbolic of the church's physical rapture before the tribulation." However, the perception of the so-called "rapture" as an escape from tribulation does not do justice to the ecclesiology of Revelation. Both Scripture and history confirm that the church is always identified and associated with persecution and trials on this side of glory.

The Church, therefore, is mainly in the first section of Revelation (1-3) defined as a community of servants of God (1:1), loved by Jesus Christ (1:5), and freed from their sins by Jesus-Christ's blood [death] (1:5). Having been loosened from their sins, the Church becomes a community, which has been made to be a kingdom and priests unto (or for) God, the Father of Jesus Christ. This community has the sole purpose of serving none other than the God of Jesus Christ (1:6). This service is for them both a privilege and a huge responsibility. Hence, in Rev. 1:1, the community is described as "his [God's] servants."

Further, the Church is also known as a community of fellow brothers and companions in the suffering, kingdom, patience and endurance, which are theirs in Christ (1:9). The Church is consequently and respectively presented in political, religious and sociological terms—a kingdom as kings, the priesthood as priests and a family as fellow brothers and sisters.

As 'seven lampstands', the Revelation Church as a whole is the dwelling place of the Son of Man (1:13). The Son of Man (1:13) who is also the Son of God (2:18) and God himself (1:17, 18) is pictured like a man dwelling in the midst of (among) his people (1:13). Remarkably, as already pointed out that the place where the Son of Man is seen for the very first time by the seer is not on his glorified throne in heaven, but with and among his people. This displays how precious God's people are to him—the Church is so dear to Christ, even though it doesn't seem so to us (cf. Eph. 5:21). He must be in their midst because he loves them, and he has freed them from their sins (1:5).

Easley (1998:18) equally observes "John sees Jesus among the lampstands. The one who "loves us and freed us from our sins" (v. 5) is first presented in Revelation, not enthroned in heaven or fighting evil but present with and caring for his people. Suffering Christians throughout the ages have taken comfort in Jesus' presence with them." Though the militant Church appears weak in so many ways and full of blemishes on this side of glory (cf. 2-3), Christ still loves her, and hence as the Son of Man, he dwells with no shame in their midst.

As the faithful (1:5), and true witness (3:14), and by dwelling in their midst, the Son of Man becomes the driving force and the inspiration behind the mission of the Church—the witnessing role in this world. As 'seven lampstands', the Church will not bring about the light of prophecy and witness to the world without the dwelling of the Son of Man in their midst.

The light of the gospel shines so long as we keep Christ at the centre of his precious but weak Church. Phillips (2017:28) rightly describes the light, which is to be shown by the Church as "Christ's light." This is true because this light is nothing but the testimony of Jesus Christ. The Son of Man dwells among his people to permeate the whole of his mission. His presence is protective and inspirational. The testimony of Jesus Christ, which the Church is to bear, is described like that because the Son of Man, who is the king of God's people, is right at the centre of the church. He is in their midst.

The seven (7) churches are informed right from the opening pages of the book that their Savior is the firstborn from *the dead* and it is by his *death* [blood] that they have been loosened from their sins (1:5). From that, it is to be noted that though Jesus is

the hero of the book and the king of God's people, the motif of his death resonates right from the very first pages of the book (1:5 cf. v.7). Revelation juxtaposes the death motif with that of life. These motifs apply to both Jesus and his Church. The combination of Jesus's identity as the firstborn from the dead and what his death has achieved for his people, i.e., freedom from sins introduces a theme, which is prominent in this section and the rest of the book. Physical death becomes, therefore, not something Christians should escape, but experience because of belonging to and following the one who died for their sins and came to life once more.

5.2.1. John is slain in the presence of the glorified Messiah.

In the first vision, John *fell as though dead* at the feet of the Son of Man (1:17). Later, in the second vision, John sees the hero of the book, the Lamb *standing* at the heart of the throne, but looking as *slain* (5:6). John fell as though dead. But the Lamb is standing, which has a connotation of his resurrection. The above two expressions in italics are theologically connected in Revelation. One has a connotation of bad news, i.e. it informs us of the sinful condition of a human being, whereas the other one has the connotation of good news. John's "though dead" (1:17) at the feet of the Son of man corresponds to Eph. 2:1-3 while the Lamb's "though slain" (5:6) at the centre of the throne matches to Eph. 2:4-10. The "though dead" in 1:17 is the seer's version of being slain in God's presence.

Phillips (2017:79, 80) describes John's experience of falling apart as though dead as *being slain* in the presence of God's holy glory. He (2017:78) then contends, "in fact, John depicts how sinners always respond to the true vision of the holiness of Christ, whether in person or the pages of Scripture." Then, he (2017: 79, 80) further explains from Scripture the two reasons men are slain in the splendour of God's glory— "the awe of creatures in the divine's presence and the sinner in the presence of the divine holiness." Easley (1998:20) points out that "John made the only right response that humans can make to the direct appearance of God: I fell at his feet as though dead." Therefore, the "though slain" of the Lamb in the second seer's vision (5:6) stands as the right solution to the "though dead" of the seer himself in his first version (1:17).

In Revelation, at times, what the seer sees carries more weight as compared to what he hears. Remarkably, the seer is as though dead in the first vision, and the second vision, the Lamb is as though slain. The seer *heard* behind him a loud voice like a trumpet (1:9). But when he turned to see the voice, he *saw* among other things, someone like a Son of Man (1:13). He heard a voice, but he saw the one like the Son of Man. John was not satisfied with what he heard. Hence, as a seer, he turned to see. When he saw him, he fell at his feet as though dead. Coming to the second vision, John is told by one of the elders that he should not weep. Then he heard the voice of one elder telling him to “behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered so he can open the scroll and its seven seals” (5:5).¹⁴⁴ Again, as a seer, he, however, saw the Lamb looking as though slain (5:6). He first saw the Son of Man in his blossom glory (1:13-16). Then he saw the same person now standing at the centre of the throne as the slaughtered Lamb.

In the first vision, the seer is told not to be afraid. The reason for him not to be scared lies in the identity of the Son of Man, especially to his death—He is the Living One, he was dead and behold now he is alive, and he holds the keys of death and Hades (1:17-18). These words are comforting words, especially to the sinner who because of his sinful state is slain in the presence of the divine Son of Man.

5.2.2. Death of Jesus as a paradigm of the death and the slaughter of the Church.

To the Church of Smyrna (2:1-11), the Son of man introduces himself as the one who died and came to life again. Thus, the congregation of Smyrna is commanded to be faithful amid their suffering and persecution even to the point of death. That the Son of man who died and came to life again should inspire and motivate the church to suffer persecution to the point of death. They have the promise of a crown of life and will not be hurt by the second death. These beautiful promises are all based on who the Son of man is with death and resurrection—he died and came to life again. They too will even be put to death but will live again since they will receive a crown of life. They do not escape death but go through it and then live again. Antipas in the Pergamum Church is a pattern of someone faithful even to the point of death (2:13).

¹⁴⁴ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Rev. 5:5). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

5.3. THE COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS IS GOD'S PEOPLE.

The second last section of Revelation (17-19) focuses on the fall and the judgment of the enemies of God's people. God's enemies are punished because of what they did against the Church. The judgment against God's enemies is also in line with the slaughtering Church's outcry for justice as seen in 6:10. It is an answered prayer. In this section, they give the community of believers three imperatives concerning God's judgment against its foes.

In the first imperative (18:4) the community of believers is addressed as ὁ λαός μου, "my people." This is the only occurrence in which God addresses the community of believers as such in Revelation. Though, there is a similar language in Rev. 21:3, καὶ αὐτοὶ λαοὶ αὐτοῦ ἔσονται (they will be his peoples) where the covenantal expression connotes. This phrase (ὁ λαός μου) assumes, first of all, that the voice coming from heaven (18:4) could be God's. Second, the "my people" (ὁ λαός μου) emphasizes the fact that the community of believers, the Church is known as God's people in the same way that O.T Israel was known as God's people in covenantal terms (cf. οὐλή). God does not have two peoples, but one—the Church is now the people of God. Third, the appellation "my people" presupposes that redemption and covenant have taken place (cf. Exodus 6:6-7). For, it is within the redemptive context that Israel was known as God's people exceptionally—God enters into a special relationship with them (Ex. 6:6-7).

Further, in this first imperative, God's people are required to come out of Babylon the Great so they may not partake in her sins and thus take part in her judgment (18:4). Though in the Greek language the aorist imperative is generally undefined or the default, it seems that the Ἐξέλθατε (come out) has been deliberately used here as opposed to the present imperative, in order to stress the urgency and a "onetime" sense of coming out Babylon (cf. Duff, 2005:81). So, by enjoying a special relationship as God's people (my people), the community is commanded to come out of the world as a system once for all. This call is urgently made because of who they are (God's special people) and particularly considering the rigorousness of God's judgment. Beale (1999:898) points out that the separation to which the community of faith is called does not involve a physical, but a moral escape.

5.4. THE COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS IS A HOLY APOSTOLIC AND PROPHETIC COMMUNITY.

In the second imperative (Εὐφραίνου ἐπ’ αὐτῇ) the community of believers is addressed in threefold designation as οἱ ἅγιοι καὶ οἱ ἀπόστολοι καὶ οἱ προφῆται (saints, and apostles and prophets). The command is for this community, which is presented in its three facets to *rejoice* over (Εὐφραίνου ἐπ’ αὐτῇ) Babylon the Great because God has judged her for the way she treated it (18:20).

The designations οἱ ἀπόστολοι καὶ οἱ προφῆται (apostles and prophets) are here not employed in their technical and fundamental sense, but in their broader sense to portray the whole community of God’s people, as a holy apostolic and prophetic community. Technically, the designation of an apostle will be exclusively reserved for the Twelve Apostles, including the apostle Paul. However, those who are referred to as ὁ λαός μου (my people) in the first imperative (18:4) are the ones designated as οἱ ἅγιοι καὶ οἱ ἀπόστολοι καὶ οἱ προφῆται (saints, apostles and prophets) in the second (18:20). It is the same community.

Grammatically, it is likely that Revelation gives the command to rejoice not to four (4) but two (2) categories of communities—the inhabitants of heaven and the people of God on earth. The οὐρανὲ (O heaven!) phrase is in a vocative case and used here as metonymy in which a linked term is used to stand in for an object or concept—heaven stands in for its dwellers that could be heavenly beings. The second category is, however, not in the vocative case, but in the nominative case, masculine plural (οἱ ἅγιοι καὶ οἱ ἀπόστολοι καὶ οἱ προφῆται) depicting the militant Church here on earth. Besides, John uses ἁγίων καὶ προφητῶν “saints and prophets” (18:20; 16:6), προφητῶν καὶ ἁγίων “of the prophets and the saints” (18:24) to identify the same category of people—the Church, the community of believers.

Though the saints, prophets and apostles may be depicted as those who compose the new people of God as Beale (1999:916) points out, these designations are often used interchangeably in Revelation. For this reason, note that “apostles” is left out in 16:6 and 18:24 but included in the command to rejoice over Babylon’s fall in 18:20. The idea in 16:6 and 18:24 is not that the blood, which was shed and was to be avenged for, is that of saints and prophets, excluding the blood of the apostles.

18:20 points out that God judges Babylon for the way she treated “you.” The ὑμῶν “for you” of 18:20 refers to both the saints, prophets including apostles.¹⁴⁵

In 17:6, it is indicated that the woman was drunk with the blood of the saints and the blood of the witnesses of Jesus. Here (17:6) neither the prophets nor the apostles are mentioned. This is because John has them in mind even though he does not explicitly mention them. The apostles and prophets are the saints and witnesses of 17:6. For this reason, even though the apostles are left out in 18:24, they are still implicitly mentioned since the reason to rejoice is indicated in 18:20 that judgment is given for the saints *and apostles and* prophets against Babylon.

Revelation uses interchangeably these three markers to stress different aspects of the mission and identity of the Church. When John uses one of these three labels, he expects his readers to have the other two in mind because for him those labels describe the whole community of believers stressing its mission and uniqueness in the world.

Having 18:24 in mind and elaborating on the three groups of texts on the blood in Revelation, Decock (2004:170) rightly points out that “[i]n fact, at the beginning and at the end of the chapters in which we find this second group we have a mention of the “slaughter” of the saints (6:9; 18:24).” So, semantically, 18:20 could be translated as, “Rejoice, O heaven and saints, meaning you who are apostles and prophets.” In 16:6, we could render it as “for they have shed the blood of your saints who are your prophets.” The same applies to the expression “the blood of the saints and the blood of the martyrs of Jesus” (17:6) can be translated as “the blood of saints, which is the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.”

5.5. THE COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS IS A COMMUNITY OF SERVANTS OF GOD.

The third imperative (Αἰνεῖτε τῷ θεῷ ἡμῶν πάντες) is directed to the same community of believers, but this time it addresses the community with another label as οἱ δοῦλοι αὐτοῦ (his servants) (19:5). Here, the terms saints, prophets and apostles, even witnesses are all left out. In this third imperative, God’s servants are

¹⁴⁵ For further readings on some proponents of the idea that prophets and saints refer to one group of which prophets is specific and saints is more general see (Beckwith, I.T 2001; Thomas R.L, 1995 & Mounce, R.H, 1997). There are many other scholars who argue for two groups (Caird, G.B, 1966; Lenski, R.C.H. 1963).

commanded to “praise our God” (Αἰνεῖτε τῷ θεῷ ἡμῶν). Again, the expression “you who fear him, both small and great” gives a further description of the οἱ δοῦλοι αὐτοῦ—God’s servants are a combination of God’s fearing people regardless of their social status (small or great). They are to praise God because of God’s judgment against Babylon (19:1-2). The servants of God are to praise him because it is their blood that has been avenged (19:2). They shed their blood as this community is serving God. Their service is, therefore, vindicated.

Three times (3x), the community of believers is addressed as servants in this section (19:2, 5, 10). The designation “his [God’s] servants (οἱ δοῦλοι αὐτοῦ)” in this section agrees with how the Church is described in the first three chapters of Revelation (cf. Rev. 1:1). This designation is also linked to the purpose of their redemption and formation as a kingdom and priests. They have been freed from their sins and made up into a kingdom and priests with the sole purpose of *servicing* God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (1:6; 5:9). In Revelation, the designation “servants” is another way of describing the Church, which is the ὁ λαός μου (my people) of 18:5. Though angelic beings are also known as God’s servants (cf. fellow servant in 19:10), strictly, it is only those who are God’s people and have experienced the forgiveness of sin that can genuinely serve him. For, unlike angels, their service is rooted and founded in their redemption and not on creation alone.

There is a secure link between the service and the testimony of Jesus. This is clearly shown in 19:10. To explain why he calls himself a fellow servant with John, the angel points out one thing they have in common—the fact of holding the testimony of Jesus. At the heart of the service to God, there is nothing but the testimony of his Son; Jesus Christ—the fundamental aspect of their function is to hold the word of God, which is the testimony of Jesus. Beale’s (1999:947) reasoning on 19:10 is in line with the preceding as he argues “those giving the testimony to [and from] Jesus are a prophetic people.”¹⁴⁶ This is against the great dispensational view, which depicts the church as being out of the picture from chapters 4-18 since according to them, she is “raptured” at the beginning of Rev.4. However, the believing community is present in all the seven cycles of Revelation having different labels that intensify

¹⁴⁶ For further reading on the phrase “For it is the Spirit of prophecy who bears testimony to Jesus,” (19:10) I would recommend Beale (1999:946-48); Morris (1987:217) and Paul (2018:310, 11).

several and various aspects of its identity and mission. There is no such thing as “rapture of the church” in Revelation in a direction it is advocated by some dispensationalists. Their arguments are based on the “come up here” phrase of 4:1 and the absence of the word “church afterwards.”¹⁴⁷

5.6. THE COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS IS A COMMUNITY BEING SLAUGHTERED.

It is clear in 18:20 that the reason Great Babylon is judged is because of the way she treated the saints, apostles and prophets, i.e. the Church. Now, the way Babylon treated the community of believers is not explicitly stated in this verse. This section (17-19) and the overall context of Revelation specify the exact way they have mistreated the Church.

The first clue to the exact mistreatment in this section comes in 17:6 (cf. 16:6), which describes the woman as μεθύουσαν ἐκ τοῦ αἵματος τῶν ἁγίων καὶ ἐκ τοῦ αἵματος τῶν μαρτύρων Ἰησοῦ (drunk with the blood of the saints, which is the blood of the martyrs of Jesus). She drank the blood of God’s people. In Revelation, the term “blood” as pointed out by Decock (2004:157) is associated with Jesus (the blood of Jesus) with the redemptive overtone, whereas it is linked to his followers as “the blood of victims at the hand of enemies particularly at the hand of Babylon” (cf. 1:5; 6:10; 12:10; 16:6; 17:6; 18:24; 19:2 cf. 14:20).

The phrase “the woman was drunk with the blood of the saints and the blood of the martyrs of Jesus” in 17:6 has the same undertone as the phrase “[a]nd in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all who have been slain on the earth”¹⁴⁸ in 18:24. Hence, the treatment which was idiomatic and implicit in 17:6 and 18:24a is plain and explicit in 18:24b. Therefore, the colloquial language of “in her was found the blood of the saints” implies that the woman was found guilty of the slaughtering of the saints. So, Great Babylon responded to the Church by slaughtering her.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷ Beale (1999:319) observes that Thus, in vv. 1–2a John identifies himself again with the prophetic authority of the OT (cf. 1:1, 10, 12, 19–20). Therefore, there is little basis for seeing “come up here” in 4:1 and John’s spiritual rapture in v. 2 as symbolic of the church’s physical rapture before the tribulation.”

¹⁴⁸ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Re 18:24). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

¹⁴⁹ Trail (2008:154) To whom does πάντων τῶν ἐσφαγμένων ἐπιτῆς γῆς ‘all who have been slaughtered on the earth’ refer? 1. It refers to all who have been slaughtered for the cause of Christ [Alf, EC, ICC, Ld, Lns, Sw]. 2. It refers to all in general who have been murdered beginning with Abel [Hu, NIC, and NIGTC].

Revelation plainly states that Great Babylon is judged because she has slaughtered the community of believers. The saints and martyrs of Jesus in 17:6 are the prophets, the saints, and those who have been slaughtered on the earth at 18:24. The context does not suggest that the prophets, saints, and those who have been slain are three different categories. The phrase καὶ πάντων τῶν ἐσφαγμένων ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς (all those who have been slain on the earth) does not seem to include all those who have been killed in a general sense as referring to both believers and non-believers.¹⁵⁰ For, the context of this section (17-19) focuses on God's judgment against God's enemies for the way they have treated his people, his servants (18:20 cf. 19:2). So, the "all those who have been slaughtered on the earth" in 18:24 refers to particularly the believers, the people of God.

So, our reading goes in line with some scholars who argue for the fact that the phrase "all those who have been slaughtered on the earth" refers to all those who have been slaughtered for the cause of Christ.¹⁵¹ The "saints, prophets and all those who have been slaughtered on the earth" (18:24) should be taken as the three different aspects of describing the same community of believers. These features are all embedded in one description in 19:2—his servants (God's servants). Therefore, the "*Come out of her*" (first imperative found in 18:5), "*Rejoice over her*" (second imperative found in 18:20) and "*Praise our God*" (third imperative found in 19:5) are the three commands and orders given to the community of believers, the Church, in judgment against Babylon. The latter is judged because she is their slaughterer

¹⁵⁰ On the Angel and the millstone in Revelation 18:24, Michaels, J. R (1997) contends that "The image of the millstone has yet another source, closer to John's time than the prophecies of Jeremiah. Jesus said to his disciples that if anyone "shall offend" (KJV) or "put a stumbling block" (NRSV) before one of Jesus' "little ones," it would be better for that person "to be thrown into the sea with a large millstone tied around his neck" (Mk. 9:42). Rome has not exactly "put a stumbling block" before Jesus' disciples or "caused them to sin" (see Mk. 9:42 NIV). She has deceived the rest of the world instead. But to them she has done something far worse, for in her was found the blood of prophets and of the saints, and of all who have been killed on the earth (v. 24). The prostitute in John's vision was guilty of many crimes and boundless self-indulgence, but what condemns her above all is that she "was drunk with the blood of the saints" and "those who bore testimony to Jesus" (17:6). Because she offended the "little ones" who belong to Jesus, she is thrown into the sea, to sink like a stone and never be seen again" [my italics]. Commenting on Rev. 18:24, Garlands (2006) writes "Who were slain is ἐσφαγμένων [esphagmenōn], perfect passive participle, ones having been violently murdered. The city is guilty of great religious persecution. She is identical to the Harlot, who drinks the blood of the saints (Rev. 17:6+)."

¹⁵¹ The advocates of such a reading are: Alford, H. (1980); Thomas R.L. (1995); Charles, R.H. (1920); Ladd, G.E. (1972); Lenski, R.C.H. (1963); Swete, H.B. (1937).

(18:24). They avenge the former since it is their blood, which was found in the woman (17:6 cf. 16:6). The Church is, therefore, a victim.

5.7. THE BLOOD OF THE SAINTS WILL BE AVENGED, BUT CHRIST'S WILL NOT.

Remarkably, as already alluded to, the slaughterer of the Lamb is not explicitly mentioned in the Apocalypse of John, and they do not even avenge his [the Lamb's] blood. The reason for this could be the fact that the ultimate slaughterer of the Lamb is God the Father. We concluded and established this in the previous chapter on grammatical grounds as the fact that John uses the theological passive of σφάζω on the Lamb to depict God as the ultimate agent of the slaughtering of his Son. This could be theologically contentious. But it is what John wants his readers to grasp.

The Lamb is slaughtered with redemptive connotations in view (5:6, 9, 12, 13:4). On this Decock (2004:171) about the blood of Jesus in Revelation rightly observes that “[n]evertheless, the condemnation of Babylon is never linked to the murder of Jesus (in spite of 11:8), but always with that of martyrs.” Elsewhere, Decock (2004:159) reasonably points out that “no reference is made in this group to the need to vindicate the blood of Jesus on his murderers.”¹⁵² Having noted that, Revelation does not even specifically mention the “murderer” or the agent of the slaughter of Jesus. Also, when the word *crucified* (ἔσταυρώθη) is used on Jesus, no agent is mentioned (11:8). Revelation uses a theological passive applied to the slaughter and the crucifixion of Jesus. The reason they do not avenge the blood of Jesus in Revelation is that Jesus was slaughtered by his Father for redemptive purposes. However, it is the blood of the saints that is avenged (18:24).

John consistently uses the blood of Jesus and the blood of the saints in the same way. Likewise, he contrasts the use of the slaughtering of Jesus and the slaughtering of the saints in Revelation. Decock (2004:158) rightly points out that in Revelation, the blood of Jesus is used as *saving power*, whereas the blood of the saints is used as *a cry for justice* [my italics]. Likewise, John uses σφάζω with Christ in view as something done to him by his Father (though the Father is not explicitly mentioned) to redeem his people and establish God's kingdom. However, he uses the same

¹⁵² Decock (2004) has identified three contexts in which the word blood is used in Revelation.

lexeme σφάζω on the saints as something done to them, not by the Father but explicitly by God's enemies, notably, Babylon.

5.8. THE THREEFOLD OCCURRENCES OF ΣΦΑΖΩ WITH THE VIEW OF THE CHURCH.

Let us begin this section by highlighting the relationship between the lexemes αἷμα (blood) and σφάζω (I slaughter), mainly as Revelation uses them with the people of God in view. Primarily, one needs to note the fact that the threefold use (3x) of σφάζω on the people of God in Revelation (6:4; 6:9; 18:24) is half of the sixfold use (x6) of αἷμα still with people of God in view (6:10; 16:6; 17:6 (2x); 18:24; 19:2). Second, both αἷμα and σφάζω do not take prominence in their application to the ecclesiology of Revelation, but to their Christological use. That is to say, αἷμα [blood] and σφάζω [I slay] occur foremost in relation to Christ before they occur in connection to the Church. This is because “[t]he book of Revelation is about Jesus, plain and simple” (Dalrymple, 2018:38). Further, the blood of God's people is shed as they are being slaughtered. This is how the two lexemes are related.

The threefold ecclesiological use of the lexeme σφάζω in Revelation is progressive in thought and detail (6:4; 9, 18:24). The first two occurrences are found in the second section (4-7) of Revelation, whereas we locate the last in the second last section (17-19) of the book. The first occurrence (6:4) introduces what will mostly happen to the people of God in more general terms but with little detail. Then the second occurrence (6:9) highlights more information on the slaughter of God's people, such as providing the identity of the agents and the victims of the slaughter in specific conditions. This was ambiguous in the first occurrence. Further, the cause of the slaughter is also highlighted, and the second occurrence points out the judgment awaiting the slaughterers out with certainty. In the final stage, the last occurrence (18:24) closes with the fulfilment of the delayed but not denied justice at the close of the historic period. It denotes the judgment against the slaughterers of the believing community. It is to each of these occurrences we now turn.

5.8.1. First occurrence.

The first occurrence of the lexeme σφάζω with the people of God in view comes in the unfolding of the fourth seal with the red horse and its rider:

Καὶ ὅτε ἤνοιξεν τὴν σφραγίδα τὴν δευτέραν, ἤκουσα τοῦ δευτέρου ζώου λέγοντος, Ἔρχου καὶ ἐξήλθεν ἄλλος ἵππος πυρρός, καὶ τῷ καθημένῳ ἐπ’αὐτὸν ἐδόθη [αὐτῷ] λαβεῖν τὴν εἰρήνην [ἐκ] τῆς γῆς καὶ ἵνα ἀλλήλους σφάζουσιν καὶ ἐδόθη αὐτῷ μάχαιρα μεγάλη (6:3-4).

As already indicated, the phrase ἵνα ἀλλήλους σφάζουσιν (to make men slay each other) merely identifies the people of God as a part of humanity. Observing on the lexeme “slaughter,” Hendriksen (2007:99) argues that “this is not the ordinary term which John uses to indicate the act of killing or warfare.” He (2007:99) then continues to adduce that “everywhere else in the writing of the Apostle John, with only one exception (Rev. 13:3), this term [slaughter] refers to the death of Christ or the execution of believers.” Beale’s (1999:379) reasoning that “the phrase slay ‘one another’ could suggest civil strife and not persecution, as many commentators affirm,” [his emphasis] is, therefore, unlikely.

The point of the symbolism of the red horse and its rider is that believers are a part of humanity and will be executed by evil but fellow human beings who too are a part of the human race. The “each other” or “one another” is here to highlight the fact that the victims and the agents of the massacre share in humanity—the community of the people of God is a community composed of *human beings* who fall victim at the hands of their *fellow human beings*. The pronoun ἀλλήλους as already noted is not here to connote the interchange of the action of slaughtering as two-way traffic as it generally does. It is, however, here to denote the horrible death portrayed in the lexeme σφάζω as happening between fellow human beings—both the slaughterers and slaughtered are human beings.

Another stress of the red horse and its rider imagery is that the killing of God’s people is not because of natural evil, but manslaughter because of moral evil. This is a malicious and deliberate massacre of human beings who are the redeemed from the earth by their fellow human beings who are the inhabitants of the earth. Commenting on the red horse and its rider, Hendriksen (2007:99) contends that “we believe that this horse and its rider refers to religious persecution of God’s children rather than to war between nations; to slaughter and sacrifice rather than warfare.” Therefore, the first occurrence of σφάζω with the believers in view underscores the

fact that the slaughter of God's people is malicious and moral evil, but does happen under God's sovereignty by the wicked.

In this malicious and horrible evil, God's sovereignty is evident because the power to take peace from the earth has originally never been with the rider of the second horse, it was instead given (6:3). This again should probably be a theological passive—God gave the power. Real peace is not of this world but something which is granted by the risen Lord to his people (John 20:20). The community of faith lives in a non-peaceful world. It is in this context they are malevolently slaughtered by their fellow human beings. The world will generally not be peaceful. This will make the mission of the church hard and most challenging. Revelation provides not much detail in the first use of the lexeme σφάζω, with the people of God in view. The identity of the slaughterers and the slaughtered ones is not explicitly stated in this first occurrence.

5.8.2. Second occurrence

It is, however, the second occurrence of σφάζω with the people of God in view which provides many details and explicitly uncovers the identity of both the slaughterers and the slaughtered ones (6:9-10):

“Καὶ ὅτε ἤνοιξεν τὴν πέμπτην σφραγίδα εἶδον ὑποκάτω τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου τὰς ψυχὰς τῶν ἐσφαγμένων διὰ τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ διὰ τὴν μαρτυρίαν ἣν εἶχον. καὶ ἔκραξαν φωνῇ μεγάλη λέγοντες, Ἔως πότε, ὁ δεσπότης ὁ ἅγιος καὶ ἀληθινός οὐ κρίνεις καὶ ἐκδικεῖς τὸ αἷμα ἡμῶν ἐκ τῶν κατοικούντων ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς;”

On the one hand, the victims are human beings identified as “the souls (τὰς ψυχὰς) of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne” (6:9).¹⁵³ These victims are further described as οἱ σύνδουλοι αὐτῶν καὶ οἱ ἀδελφοὶ αὐτῶν οἱ λέγοντες ἀποκτένεσθαι (fellow servants and brothers and those intended to be killed) in 6:11. This is not just the death of human beings but the massacre of the servants of God who, are members of the same family of God (servants and brothers). In 6:10, the agents of the slaughter are also depicted as human beings but identified as κατοικούντων ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, (the inhabitants of the

¹⁵³ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Rev. 6:9). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

earth). This phrase [the inhabitants of the earth] is John’s way of describing humanity in its hostility against God and his people. Bauckham (1998:240) observes that “the phrase ‘the inhabitants of the earth’ is thus clearly used to indicate the universal worship of the beast and the global corruption of the earth by Babylon (cf. 19:2).”

The second occurrence of σφάζω from an ecclesiological dimension points out many things to note. First, unlike in 6:4, they explicitly mention the victims and the agents of the slaughter as elaborated above. Second, the cause of the slaughter is highlighted—the word of God and the testimony the victims had maintained. Third, unlike the blood of Jesus, the blood of the people of God resulted from their slaughter is to be avenged later (6:10). Fourth, in 6:11 the lexeme σφάζω (I slay, slaughter) and the lexeme ἀποκτείνω (I kill) are used interchangeably and as synonyms. Hence, to kill is the same as to slaughter in this context. Fifth, it indicates that the massacre of the people of God is not only to be anticipated but also accepted as part of God’s sovereign purpose. Hence, the souls are told to wait for justice patiently. Sixth, God is sovereign over the future of his people. Seventh, the cry for justice to avenge the blood of the people of God is something inevitable, not denied but delayed and will take place only afterwards, “a little longer” (ἔτι χρόνον μικρόν) (6:11). Before then, their massacre is to be embraced and accepted as a part of who they are.

5.8.3. The third occurrence.

The third and final occurrence of the lexeme σφάζω concerning the ecclesiology of the record of Revelation is in judgment against the ultimate agent of the slaughter of God’s people—Babylon (18:24). In this last occurrence, we visualise a solution to the outcry for justice, which was assured to the slain saints in the second occurrence (6:10). This judgment happens at the close of the age after “the little while” of 6:11. Revelation guarantees the downfall of Babylon in the direction they describe it in Scripture (18:2).

This judgment is pronounced based on two-dimensional charges laid against her. The first dimension relates to what she did against the inhabitants of the earth, who are her victims. They have fallen into a pitfall of her deceit. She has deceived them. In this section, the inhabitants of the earth are here designated and put in three categories: *all nations, kings of the earth and merchants* (18:3 cf. 18:23). Hence,

Babylon is judged because these “all nations, kings of the earth and merchants” have fornicated with her, grown rich from the power of her luxuries and were deceived by her sorcery (18:3, 23).

The second dimension of her charge is, this time, in connection to how the redeemed from the earth (not the inhabitants of the earth), the believing community have also fallen victim not to her deceit like the inhabitants of the earth, but of her persecution and slaughter. The people of God have been slaughtered by Babylon. Consistently like the inhabitants of the earth, Revelation categorises the redeemed from the earth in three, i.e. *Prophets, saints and all who have been slaughtered on earth* (18:24).

On the one hand, the nations [the unbelieving community] have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication (18:3) and she herself has drunk the blood of the people of God [the believing community] — their blood was found in her, on the other hand (18:24 cf. 17:6). The judgment of Babylon is based on charges of drinking. Foremost, she will be sentenced because all the nations drunk of the wine of her adultery. Second, she will be judged because she also drank the blood of the saints.

It is because the people of God are being slaughtered by Babylon that their blood is found in her (17:6; 18:24; 19:2). In Revelation and particularly in judgment, they shed the blood of the people of God because of the latter being slaughtered. The agents of the slaughter of God’s people are the inhabitants of the earth (6:10) and Babylon in particular (18:24). This slaughter happens as the Church holds the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. Hence, one has to note the active link between the slaughter of the church, their blood and the proclamation of the testimony of Christ, which causes their slaughter. We cannot separate these three.

5.8.4. Summary of this subdivision.

In closing of this section, we have noted that the lexeme σφάζω occurs thrice in Revelation in connection with the community of believers. The lexeme σφάζω is gradually unfolded in bringing some inside information. First, it is introduced in general implicit terms concerning the victims of the slaughter (6:4). The killing is taking place as a malicious evil happening between human beings. That is the point. The second occurrence explicitly unmasks the agents (the inhabitants of the land)

and the victims (those who have the testimony of Jesus) of the slaughter and even highlights the cause which led to the massacre of the saints (6:9-11). In this occurrence, the victim calls and cries out for justice, which is not denied, but delayed until the other members of the community undergo the same slaughter.

In the end, the last occurrence introduces delayed justice, which was cited and called for in the second occurrence (18:24). Remarkably, the slaughter of the Church no matter how horrible, must be expected and embraced. It identifies the community of believers, and is a part of their witnessing in this world. It has been proven that the mass murder of the believers does not threaten their identity but defines them.

5.9. THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS VERSUS THE SLAUGHTERING OF THE SAINTS.

There is a close relationship between the themes of the testimony of Jesus, which is to be borne by the community of believers and their slaughtering. It is evident in Revelation that they shed the blood of the saints as they are being slaughtered amid their central responsibility of bearing the testimony of Jesus.

5.9.1. The testimony of Jesus and the mission of the Church.

The slaughter of God's people is inevitable since it comes because of their essential mission on earth and is part of God's sovereign plan for them (cf. 6:10, 11). The fulfilling of their purpose and their slaughtering do happen concurrently. Dalrymple (2018:38) points out that

“[t]he book of Revelation may also be viewed as a manifesto, a call to the people of God. Sure, John wrote about Jesus. He did so, however, not simply that we might know Christ and who He is. Rather, he wrote to urge the people of God to faithfully imitate Christ and fulfil God's mission to the nations.”

Hence, as the believing community engages in missions, some of its members are unavoidably being slaughtered on the way. Commenting on Rev. 7, Bauckham (1993:257) contends that “the impression given by chapter 7 is that the church, spiritually preserved from the judgments on the evil world (7:1–3), and is delivered

from the world through martyrdom.”¹⁵⁴ The slaughter of God’s people cannot be escaped.

The central function of the Church here on earth is according to the Apocalypse of John, the witnessing of Christ. Holding the word of God, which is the testimony of Christ, is at the heart of the mission of the Church here on earth (6:9). Now, whether this will cause the conversion of the nations is not explicitly stated in Revelation. The verb ἔχω (I have, I hold) used at 6:9 in the indicative active imperfect 3rd Pl. εἶχον (they had held, maintained) goes with both the word of God (τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ) and the testimony (τὴν μαρτυρίαν) as its direct objects. The martyrs of Rev. 6:9-11 had maintained the word of God, which is the testimony. However, this central responsibility of the Church goes hand in hand with their persecution and slaughter.

The imperfect use of εἶχον indicates that the maintaining of the testimony of Jesus was a continual and constant responsibility of the martyrs. The word of God (τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ) is further described as μαρτυρίας αὐτῶν (the word of their testimony) in Rev. 12:11. The two concepts are somewhat put in apposition.

Further, both, the word of God, which is the word of their testimony and the blood of the Lamb are the two grounds and means through which the Church overcame the dragon (Rev. 12:11). The genitival phrase expressed in the “their testimony” neither means the testimony about them (the brothers as the subject) nor does it imply the testimony of what went on in their lifetime, although the latter could be a part of the meaning. Instead, it strongly suggests the testimony that *they* do testify, which is the word of God, the testimony of Jesus.¹⁵⁵

It is, for instance, more like what Paul says, τὸ εὐαγγέλιον μου, (my gospel) in 2 Tim. 2:8, he does not mean he [Paul] is the subject of that gospel, but merely the gospel

¹⁵⁴ On the significance of the slaughter of the people of God, Bauckham (1993:257) further points out that “Since chapter 7 is placed at the same point in the series of seal judgments as the section 10:1–11:13 occupies in the series of trumpet judgments, we may expect that there is some relationship between the two passages. The scroll, we may expect, will reveal more fully the significance of the martyrdom to which the church is called.”)

¹⁵⁵ Commenting on victory of God’s people as indicated in 12:11, Paul (2018:222) explains that “The victory has two parts, one which is *de jure* and establishes the victory, and the other which is *de facto*, in that it makes the victory real and visible. The first is the *blood of the Lamb*, which is a metonym for his death, and the second is the *word of their testimony*, that is, their faithful witness to the truth and transformative power of the death of the lamb. Without the first, there is no basis for victory over Satan and the power that he exercises; without the second, there is no reality in it. And the two are bound closely together, since true testimony means that the witnesses *did not ... shrink from death*, which is precisely following the pattern of Jesus, the faithful witness, who ‘loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood’ (1:5).”

he [Paul] preached, i.e. the gospel concerning and about Christ. These souls as Beale (1999:390) puts it "... are those who have been persecuted for their witness to God's revelation as it has come in recent history through Christ." The blood of martyrs, no matter how much they shed it; does not stand as their means of victory against the dragon. The blood of the slaughtered Lamb and the testimony having him as the centre provides the triumph of God's people against the schemes and malicious persecution of the foe.

The μαρτυρίας αὐτῶν (their testimony) of the "our brothers" in 12:11 echoes the μαρτυρίας αὐτῶν (their testimony) of the two (2) witnesses in 11:7. This is because those whom the voice of 12:10 describes as τῶν ἀδελφῶν ἡμῶν (our brothers) at the beginning of the fourth section (12-14) of Revelation are identical to the ones depicted at the end of the third section (8-11) in 11:3 as τοῖς ἑσπασιν μαρτυσιῶν μου (to my two witnesses). Thus the fellow servants are the two (2) witnesses. The tool of victory over the foes of God's people (two witnesses) is πῦρ (fire) that will come out of their mouth (11:5). This "fire" coming of their mouth is described as prophecy in 11:3, 6 and as μαρτυρίας αὐτῶν (their testimony) in 11:7. This is God's powerful and living word.

Coming to the beginning of the fourth section in 12:11, this "fire" of 11:5 which is the instrument that devours their enemies is here [12:11] accurately described as τὸν λόγον τῆς μαρτυρίας αὐτῶν "the word of their testimony." Therefore, what is called μαρτυρίας αὐτῶν (their testimony) in 11:7 is precisely what is termed τὸν λόγον τῆς μαρτυρίας αὐτῶν (the word of their testimony) in 12:11. Thus, those who are referred to as τοῖς ἑσπασιν μαρτυσιῶν μου (to my two witnesses) in 11:3, are precisely the ones who are labelled as τῶν ἀδελφῶν ἡμῶν (our brothers) in 12:10, i.e. God's people as a whole. The word of God that is the testimony of Jesus is at the heart of the mission of the church in Revelation.

5.9.2. The slaughtering of the saints and Church mission.

The mass murder of the people of God plays a substantial part in their maintaining of the testimony of Christ, which is at the centre of the kingdom of God. Dalrymple (2018:43) reminds us that "we might say, then, that the book was written first to depict Christ and His finished work. To this, we must add that it was also written as a manifesto to the people of God so that they might act. These two things, of course,

must not be separated.” To substantiate his argument, Dalrymple (2018:43) highlights that “the book of Revelation sets the work of God’s people in carrying out the mission of Christ in imitation of Christ. The descriptions of Jesus in the book of Revelation remind us of who He is, what He has done, and what we are called to do: Follow the Lamb.”

In Rev. 6:11, it is anticipated that οἱ σύνδουλοι αὐτῶν καὶ οἱ ἀδελφοὶ οἱ καὶ αὐτῶν οἱ μέλλοντες (their—fellow servants and brothers) will be killed (ἀποκτείνεσθαι from ἀποκτείνω) just like them [the souls beneath the altar]. This killing will occur during the period known as ἔτι χρόνον μικρόν (a little longer). This anticipated killing of 6:11 is what happens to the two prophets (who represent the believing community) when these complete their testimony in 11:7. According to 11:7, three things from the beast that comes up from the Abyss will occur to the two prophets at the end of their testimony—the beast will attack them, overpower them and eventually kill them (ἀποκτενεῖαυτοῦ). Of the three things, killing or slaughtering them is the climax.

We have already contended that John intended that the verb ἀποκτείνω (I kill) be understood as the verb σφάζω (I slay, slaughter) in Rev. 6:9, 11 since in those verses John uses them interchangeably. One is synonymous to the other. This reasoning is significant because when reading sections 4-7, 8-11 and 12-14 in parallel, it confirms and displays that the two prophets/witnesses of section 8-11 (cf. 11:3) are the fellow servants and brothers of section 12-14 (cf. 12:10). Next, it also implies that the time depicted as “a little longer” in section 4-7 (cf. 6:11) is equivalent to the 1260 days and 42 months in section 8-11 (cf. 11:3). This is the time of the mission of the community of believers here on earth.

Further, the massacre anticipated in section 4-7 (cf. 6:11) using the verb ἀποκτείνω is precisely what happens to the two prophets/witnesses at the closing of their testimony in section 8-11 (cf. 11:7) using the same verb ἀποκτείνω.

Following the cyclical nature of the literary structure of Revelation, in 17:6 these two (2) prophets/witnesses of Rev. 11 are described as saints and those who bore the *testimony* of Jesus and whose blood has been drunk by the woman (καὶ εἶδον τὴν γυναῖκα μεθουσαν ἐκ τοῦ αἵματος τῶν ἁγίων καὶ ἐκ τοῦ αἵματος τῶν μαρτύρων

ιησου). It must be noted that when John uses the word prophets in 18:20 and 18:24, he most likely intended his readers to understand these prophets as the very two (2) prophets/witnesses he indicated earlier in Rev. 11, i.e. the Church as a whole. So, the whole Church, the community of believers is painted with different colours to depict only their crucial mission in the service of God. It is, therefore, the same community which is described as prophets, apostles, saints, servants, brothers, priests, kingdom, etc. (1:6; 5:9; 6:11; 11:3; 12:10; 18:20, 24; 19:2). They use prophets and apostles in their non-technical terms.

Besides, the επτα λυχνιας χρυσας (seven [7] golden lampstands) of section 1-3 (1:12, 20) which depict the totality of the people of God are reasonably “reduced” to αι δυο λυχνια (two [2] lampstands) in section 8-11 (11:4). That is, in the first section of the book (1-3) the people of God as a whole are described as seven (7) golden lampstands to highlight their universality and totality, whereas, in the third section (8-11), the very people of God are depicted as two (2) lampstands to underscore the reliability of their testimony centred around the person and work of Christ.¹⁵⁶ Hence, the seven lampstands and the two lampstands depict the same community of believers but with different emphasis.

The mission of the Church is, to some extent, similar to John’s in Revelation. John is a member of the believing community, the Church. John’s mission is to testify to everything he saw—that is the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ (1:2). This is striking since, according to Revelation, there is no word of God without the testimony of Christ. Without the testimony of Jesus Christ, people no longer have the word of God. Jesus Christ is at the very heart of the service we are to render to God. Hence, John equates the testimony of Jesus Christ to the word of God. God’s word is at the core of the mission of the Church.

¹⁵⁶ “But it would be better to say that, if the seven lampstands are representative of the whole church, since seven is the number of completeness, the two lampstands stand for the church in its role of witness, according to the well-known biblical requirement that evidence be acceptable only on the testimony of two witnesses (Num. 35:30; Deut. 17:6; 19:15; cf. Matt. 18:16; John 5:31; 8:17; 15:26–27; Acts 5:32; 2 Cor. 13:1; Heb. 10:28; 1 Tim. 5:19). They are not part of the church, but the whole church insofar as it fulfils its role as faithful witness” (Bauckham, 1993:274).

The reason behind Jesus freeing us from our sins and making us a kingdom and priests is specific *to serve* God and the Father of our Lord Jesus (1:6). The same truth is emphasised in 5:10, “you have made them be a kingdom and priests *to serve* our God...” [my italics]. Now, how do we serve this God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ? What is at the core of this service? Revelation replies that the Church serves God by holding the testimony of Jesus Christ since the testimony of Jesus is the word of God, the Father.

As noted earlier, in Rev. 6:9, the expressions, word of God (τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ) and testimony (τὴν μαρτυρίαν) are used interchangeably—the word of God is, therefore, nothing but the testimony the martyrs had maintained. Elsewhere the testimony is specified as not just the testimony but τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, the testimony of Jesus Christ (1:2).

If Revelation introduces Jesus as the king with the central mission of establishing the kingdom of God through his death [blood] and resurrection, the Church is presented as a prophetic and apostolic community with the task of serving God by holding and maintaining the testimony of Jesus Christ during persecution leading to their slaughter. Moreover, the kingdom of God is expanded to reach out to all nations with nothing but the testimony of Jesus Christ, which is the word of God.

So, on the one hand, the shed blood of Jesus has played a redemptive role by freeing his people from their sins (1:5) and turning these people into a community of priests and kings to serve God, the Father (1:6; 5:9). The blood of the saints is being shed as they continue to fulfil their mission as priests and a kingdom in serving God by maintaining the testimony of Jesus even to death (6:9).

The slaughter of the people of God is, therefore, permitted by God under His sovereign rule and providential care until the close of this historical period. This is because the slaughter of the saints somewhat serves God’s purposes in a “little while.” The slaughter as it is expressed in the lexeme σφάζω is a part of the Church’s identity and mission on this side of the glory. That God’s justice is delayed for a little longer and not denied in Revelation (6:9-10) shows that the community of the people of God will never cease to be identified with the slaughtering on this side of the glory. It is something that should be anticipated and accepted as an integral part of their identity and mission on this planet.

Speaking on the “little longer” of Rev. 6:9-11, Decock (2004:159, 160) argues that “[d]uring the brief delay God manages the consequences of idolatry and bloodshed (the plagues) in such a manner that they may challenge people and that may bring them to repentance.” This reasoning indicates how, in Revelation, traumatising is transformed into something positive. This time they have converted it into a tool for reaching out to the nations with the gospel aiming at leading them to repentance in this interim period. Hence, according to Revelation, the traumatising of God’s people as it is portrayed and loaded in the lexeme σφάζω should not be resisted either violently or non-violently, but it should be embraced and accepted as an essential part of their identity in the “little longer” (6:11).

5.9.3. The suffering witness of the church, her slaughter and the conversion of the nations.

The response which is given to the outcry for justice in Rev. 6:11 does not suggest any resistance against traumatising and violence but rather acceptance. Therefore, though the slaughter of the saints is vicious and will eventually be avenged, it appears to be an integral part of their identity in this “little longer.”

The suffering witness of the followers of the lamb, which often leads them to be slaughtered is a component of their service rendered to God as a kingdom and priesthood. Though aimed at the conversion of the nations through repentance, the slaughter of God’s people does not extend to that. Bauckham (1993:258) argues that the suffering witness of the followers of the Lamb is God’s second tool following up that of judgment in bringing about the conversion of the nations before the Parousia. In Revelation, judgment alone does not and will not achieve repentance in the nations argues Bauckham. He (1993:258) maintains that

“[t]he Lamb’s conquest, which had the initial effect of redeeming the church from all the nations, has the aim of bringing all the nations to repentance and the worship of God. It achieves this aim as the followers of the Lamb participate in his victory by their suffering witness.”

A careful reading of Revelation will observe that it is not explicitly evident that the suffering witness of the Church leading to their slaughter will bring about repentance in the nations. Whether the conversion of the nations will take place is not the issue.

In his chapter 9 dedicated to the conversion of the nations, Bauckham (1993:238) asserts that “[i]n this chapter, we shall demonstrate that the question of the conversion of the nations—not only whether it will take place but also how it will take place—is at the centre of the prophetic message of Revelation.” Here, the matter is what will enable that conversion if at all it will take place. Bauckham (1993:277) is right to observe that judgment alone does not bring about the repentance of nations in Revelation. Bauckham (1993:258) argues that “Martyrdom is not simply the church’s deliverance from the world, but the culmination of the church’s witness to the world. Where judgments alone have failed to bring the nations to repentance, the church’s suffering witness, along with judgments, will be effective to this end.”

The inquiry is whether the suffering witness and the massacre of the people of God will facilitate repentance and conversion of the nations. À propos of this, McNicol refutes Bauckham’s thesis on the conversion of the nations through the suffering witness and martyrdom of the followers of the Lamb. After careful observation and analysis of Bauckham’s thesis on the conversion of the nations, McNicol (2011:10, 11) points out that “[i]n each instance, Bauckham’s interpretation of a conversion of the nations through the suffering witness of the church appears to be read into the text.” For McNicol (2011:16) “He [John] argues that the ultimate defeat and conversion of the nations will take place in the context of the awesome presence of the Divine Warrior.” That the conversion of the nations will take place is not something McNicol disagrees with. However, what will facilitate that conversion is an issue for McNicol.

Many scholars have observed the apparent contradiction and tension between the destruction of the nations and their ultimate restoration. The reappearance of nations in New Jerusalem in Revelation has so far been a bone of contention. There have been many attempts among scholars to resolve this tension. The above propositions from Bauckham and McNicol are some of the efforts in solving the so-called tension. Other scholars who have also wrestled with this issue are Sweet (1979, 1981) and Mathewson (2003).

For Bauckham, the phrase “... and the survivors were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven” (11:13) highlights a fact about a genuine repentance and conversion of the nations which occurs as the result of the suffering witness and the slaughter of

the two witnesses who represent the Church as a whole (cf. 1993:277).¹⁵⁷ However, the phrase plainly explains the reality at the end of the age (11:13). This chapter 11 closes the section that began in ch. 8. Every section covers the whole period from the first coming of the Lord Jesus to his second coming. What happens to the survivors of 11:13 is not genuine repentance, but public recognition of the sovereignty of God which is motivated by fear. The giving of glory to the God of heaven is like the words of King Nebuchadnezzar praising the God of Shadrack, Meshack and Abednego in Dn. 3:28. Like the king, the survivors of Rev. 11:13 give glory to the God of heaven, but not from a genuinely repentant heart.

Just as one has to read the next chapter in Daniel, i.e. Dn. 4 to prove that the king did not repent in ch. 3, so it is with Rev. 11. It is the next and last woe, which somewhat demonstrates that these survivors will not survive forever. Though they come through the second woe, none of them will survive in the third and the final woe. They will be judged and destroyed when, at the end of the age, the Lord Almighty will take his great power and begin to reign (11:17, 18). If the survivors sincerely repented and got converted in 11:13, who are those who are referred to as those who destroyed the earth in 11:18? The Lord God Almighty will eventually destroy these in the final woe. The survivors of 11:13 are part of the ones that are referred to as the inhabitants of the earth in 11:10 and are those who destroy the earth in 11:18. McNicol (2011:11) could, therefore, be right as he argues that “Revelation 11–19 is about many things. But a great success in conversion does not seem to be one of them.”

If the suffering, faithful witness and finally the slaughter of the followers of the Lamb does not bring about repentance and conversion of the nations, then what is their role in Revelation? This question is vital because both God’s judgment and the suffering witness of the Church will not facilitate the actual conversion of the nations in Revelation, (cf. ch. 9:20-21). However, the suffering witness of the believing community and their slaughter play a hugely different role in Revelation and not necessarily that of leading to the conversion of the nations. Their role has some similarities to that which they played in the life and ministry of Jesus.

¹⁵⁷ “There should be no doubt that the end of 11:13 (οἱ λοιποὶ ἔμ φοβοὶ ἐγένοντο καὶ ἔδωκαν δόξαν τῷ θεῷ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ) refers to genuine repentance and worship of God by the pagan world which is symbolized by the great city” (Bauckham, 1993:278).

It is noteworthy that right from the opening pages of the book of Revelation, Jesus is identified as the faithful witness and firstborn from the dead. Hence, to follow the Lamb wherever he goes partly means that his followers will be faithful witnesses, and this will cause them to be slaughtered. “That the people of God are to emulate Jesus provides the key to understanding the significance of the great affirmation that the people of God ‘are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes’ (14:4)” (Dalrymple, 2018:42). The slaughter of the people of God is their identity. It is who they have become by following the Lamb. More than that, the witness of the people of God and their slaughter is what it means to overcome. This kind of victory Dalrymple calls an ironic notion of overcoming (2018:50).

That the mass murder of God’s people identifies them well with the Lamb whom they follow and that it is how they overcome is one of the leading themes in Revelation. It is one of the outstanding examples where trauma is transformed into a therapeutic tool. Looking at the slaughter of the people of God through the lenses of their identity by following Christ and their overcoming appeals to a different response to suffering, persecution and death other than that of violent or nonviolent resistance. Dalrymple (2018:42) adduces that “thus, Jesus is “the firstborn from the dead.” This title should provide confidence for the people of God—even if you are killed, you too will be resurrected. After all, if Jesus is the firstborn, then you shall be second!”

The expression ἔτι χρόνον μικρόν (a little longer) of Rev. 6:11 is an answer to the outcry for justice, “Ἔως πότε, ὁ δεσπότης ὁ ἅγιος καὶ ἀληθινός οὐ κρίνεις καὶ ἐκδικεῖς τὸ αἷμα ἡμῶν ἐκ τῶν κατοικούντων ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς;” (6:10). Besides, the ἔτι χρόνον μικρόν (a little longer) is the exact duration through which they will also kill their fellow servants and brothers. Also, this ἔτι χρόνον μικρόν (a little longer) is as already pointed out most likely the same period described as 1260 days in Rev. 11; 12 with the ministry and suffering period of the two witnesses. Two critical things characterise this period these are the prophetic mission of the Church and their persecution, leading to the massacre of its members.

5.10. CONCLUSION.

The slaughter of the saints packaged in the lexeme σφάζω is naturally introduced in Revelation as a horrible but malicious event which occurs to them as they follow the Lamb wherever he goes (Rev. 14:4). We established this truth after a thorough

inquiry, especially for the first and the second occurrences of the lexeme σφάζω with the Church in view (6:4, 9-11). As indicated, we should know that the “little longer” of 6:10 is the time frame in which the identity of the Church is defined by the events of slaughter. This timeframe is the equivalent of the 1260 days and the 42 months of sections 8-11 and 12-14. Hence, the appealed Christian response, which seemed to be advocated in Revelation about such events, is not resistance but rather acceptance. These traumatic events are under God’s sovereign control since the power to take peace out of the earth *was given the* rider of the fiery red horse (6:4). The traumatic event embedded in the lexeme σφάζω is, therefore, to be embraced by the community of the people of God because in Revelation such an event, is not only under God’s sovereign control, but is an event which has also been paradoxically transformed into a potent tool of victory for God’s people.

In Revelation, traumatising, as it is set in the lexeme σφάζω, is staged neither as an alien nor as a threatening event to the identity of the followers of the Lamb, but as a function of their very identity and missionary work, especially in this “little longer” time frame. It is only when trauma is perceived as an alien and a threat to our identity, that the response would be violent or non-violent resistance. However, a violent or non-violent resistance theology does not seem to be what Revelation is advocating for the believing community. The community of believers is instead called to take on the traumatising, which happens to them as the consequence of their holding to the testimony of Jesus (Rev. 6:9-11). Preserving the testimony of Jesus is central to the Church mission in Revelation. It is worth pointing out that Revelation recommends the resistance approach only concerning Greco-Roman idolatry and false teaching which infiltrated in the church in various forms.

To arrive at the above assumptions, this chapter began by looking at some descriptions of the Church, the believing community in Revelation, especially metaphors that are directly related to the use of the lexeme σφάζω. The intention was not that of creating an exhaustive ecclesiology of Revelation. This chapter aimed, preferably, at investigating how the lexeme σφάζω fits into the Revelation depiction of the community of believers—the ecclesiological dimension of the lexeme.

The chapter has pointed out that the believing community is described as a church or churches in Revelation in its first section (1-3). Using that designation, Revelation highlights the universal scope of the community of God's people. Further, the heptad lampstands of the first section of Revelation (1-3) are reduced to two lampstands in the third section (8-11) to designate the whole community of the people of God as two prophets/witnesses. This reduction is because of the different emphasis on the identity, and particularly the missionary work of the Church. As two lampstands, the focus is now on the trustworthiness of the testimony that the community of believers holds in this universe.

Looking at the Church in Revelation, the researcher argued that as a community of God's people was freed from their sins to serve God. They serve God as a holy, apostolic and prophetic community. The first charge of the Church in Revelation is to preserve the testimony of Jesus. This testimony of Jesus is the word of God in Revelation. In holding the testimony of Jesus, the community of believers is demonstrating its *raison d'être*.

This chapter has demonstrated that it is by her mission and nature that the Church will continue to be a slaughtered community. The lexeme σφάζω is used to denote some developments in the life and mission of the Church. This study contended that the first occurrence of the lexeme σφάζω (Rev. 6:4) presents the massacre of the people of God in general terms with some ambiguities and without many details. The peak of this occurrence was to depict the mass murder of the people of God as a malicious and brutal act happening among human beings. The people of God are human beings who are being brutally slain by their fellow human beings. In this first occurrence, the chapter has established that the massacre of the people of God is not a consequence of natural evil, but a malicious and moral evil perpetrated by people with whom they share humanity.

This study highlighted that it is the second occurrence of the lexeme σφάζω (6:9) in view of the Church which outlays some details which were "missed" in the first occurrence. In here, the identity of the victim is understandable: the souls of those who were slain because of their mission—maintaining the testimony of Jesus. It is here that Revelation informs us that they will avenge their blood. The blood of the Lamb whom they follow is never avenged in Revelation. The perpetrators of the

slaughter of God's people are identified as the inhabitants of the earth in the second occurrence of the lexeme σφάζω. In the third occurrence (18:24), we argued that the justice that was promised in the second occurrence (6:10) has now come to pass. The perpetrators of the slaughter of the people of God are eventually brought to book and judged.

At the centre of this chapter, the researcher highlighted that the slaughter of the people of God is one of the major features with which they are identified on this side of glory as being the followers of the slain Lamb before the Parousia. The people of God are not to resist it in any way, but accept it as part of who they are by following a slain Lamb. Their slaughter, though traumatic, has been transformed in Revelation as prophecy, an integral part of their mission and as, paradoxically, the way they overcome the world.

CHAPTER 6: HOW THE LEXEME ΣΦΆΖΩ FITS INTO REVELATION’S DEPICTION OF THE BEAST (THERIONOLOGICAL DIMENSION)

6.1. INTRODUCTION.

The lexeme σφάζω which seems to be “dodged” by all the other New Testament writers is picked up twice (2x) in 1 John and seven times (7x) in Revelation to denote the cruel deaths of Jesus and his followers. It is also used once (1x) to depict the death-blow of the beast in Revelation (13:3). We have already observed that each of the four occurrences in Revelation of the lexeme σφάζω relating to the Lamb is in a *theologically* passive voice (5:6, 8, 9; 13:8). The lexeme σφάζω is equally used twice (2x) to refer to the followers of the Lamb (6:9, 18:24) in the passive voice and once (1x) (6:4) in an infinitive mood to denote the malicious and moral evil which human beings will do unto their fellow human beings.

This study contended in the previous chapter that Rev. 6:3 pictures the killing of the followers of the Lamb occurring not as a natural evil but as a moral and malicious evil happening to human beings. The point in Rev. 6:3 was, therefore, twofold—the slaughterer and the slaughtered ones are all sons and daughters of Adam (human beings), and the action of killing is an intentional and malicious evil happening in the universe where peace has been taken away.

Revelation, as already noted, has three dimensions of the use of the lexeme σφάζω. The first two, i.e., the Christological and ecclesiological levels, have already been dealt with in the previous chapters. In those chapters, the researcher has repeatedly pointed out that there is a considerable transformation motif in John’s use of the lexeme σφάζω. That very point is the thrust of this thesis within all of its aspects. In both, Christological and ecclesiological dimensions, the lexeme σφάζω is used to transform the negative and traumatic connotations which are loaded into some experiences and events which can, hence, be adopted and celebrated by the community of believers.

Two of the differences between the Christological and ecclesiological uses of the lexeme σφάζω pointed out in the previous chapters lie in the sense that Revelation explicitly mentions the perpetrators of the slaughter of the Church as the “inhabitants of the earth” and Babylon the Great. The blood of the saints which is

shed as a result of their slaughter will eventually be avenged; whereas based on the theological passive use of the lexeme σφάζω, the unmentioned slaughterer of the Lamb seems to be the Father, and there is no mention of the blood of the Lamb being avenged in Revelation even though the Lamb is vindicated by the fact he is on the throne and ruling the universe.

The traumatising embodied in the lexeme σφάζω functions not as a threat but as an inbuilt component of the identity of both the Lamb and his followers. For this reason, we concluded that the right response advocated in Revelation to traumatising, particularly as it is denoted in the lexeme σφάζω is acceptance rather than either violent or nonviolent resistance. However, what the Church is called to resist is the idolatry and immoral culture of the Roman Empire rather than the consequences that result from such resistance, i.e. persecution and slaughter.

Yet purposefully, John uses the lexeme σφάζω once (1x) in describing the experience of the beast (13:3). He also refers to the death-blow of the beast at least twice (2x) (13:12, 14). Most of what we have highlighted in the Christological dimension of the lexeme σφάζω also applies to the therionological (the theology of the beast) aspect of the lexeme. This is because John's theology of the beast is presented in the framework of a travesty of the Lamb. Hence, the current chapter will investigate how the lexeme σφάζω fits into Revelation's depiction of the beast.

The thrust of this chapter is to demonstrate that the lexeme is used as an identity marker of the beast. Hence, the traumatic undertones which accompany the lexeme σφάζω have been transformed into something "positive," since that is the function of the lexeme σφάζω in Revelation.

To achieve this, the researcher will first summarize the beast's imagery in Scripture and in Revelation, and then he will show how much the slaughter of the beast is the travesty of the Lamb. Next, the researcher will attempt to unmask the unmentioned agent of the beast's slaughter.

For this reason, it will also be necessary to demonstrate in this chapter that the survival of the beast operates on a parallel with the resurrection, together with the fact that Revelation bases the universal worship of the beast in its slaughter. Last,

the researcher will highlight that the slaughter of the beast is its identity marker, which is associated with the mark of the beast in Revelation 13:18.

Chapter 3.6 of this study, entitled as *The Apocalyptic Dimension of Σφάζω* has already tackled most of the elements this chapter is concerned with. As pointed out in the introductory section of this thesis, here again, a narrative approach will identify the nature of evil according to Revelation.

6.2. THE BEAST IMAGERY IN SCRIPTURE AND REVELATION.

The beast imagery is prevalent in the canon of Scripture. It is not, however, within the scope of this study to discuss its prevalence. However, the first beast imagery we get from Scripture is applied to the devil himself as he is presented as a serpent in Gen. 3. This imagery has since then predominantly been given a negative connotation in Scripture portraying mostly the “outsiders” in so far as God’s family and kingdom are concerned.

Dn. 4, for instance, records the verdict inflicted on Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon because of his pride and to make him acknowledge the sovereignty of Yahweh. In his dream, not only is he likened to a tree which will be cut down (Dn. 4:23-27) but, also, as a beast God will drive him away from people to live with the other beasts. He will be one of them. He is and will be a beast. Wood (1973:116) points out that “this phrase [made to eat herbage] and they include the next to show what Nebuchadnezzar’s manner of life was to be like while living with animals. He will not merely live *where* they lived, but as *they* lived” [italics original].

It is not accidental that it is the king of Babylon who is reduced to a beast. Babylon has a negative connotation in the Scripture, and particularly in Revelation. Lowery (2011:145) adduces that “[b]ecause Babylon was an unparalleled antagonist in Israel’s history; it became the example of an earthly kingdom that sets itself against the kingdom of God.” The principle is, therefore, that any kingdom in opposition to the throne of Yahweh is a beast and its leadership behaves in a beastly manner.

Belshazzar, who is Nebuchadnezzar’s great son, seems to be the next beast on the throne of the Babylonian empire. In his reign, he behaves in a stupid and beastly manner. For in his madness he “commanded that the vessels of gold and of silver

that Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken out of the temple in Jerusalem be brought, that the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them” (Dan. 5:2).¹⁵⁸ This is what you would expect from any beastly governing authorities of all ages—no reverence for God nor his worship. On this, (2010:50) points out that “... for John, a beast represents an empire which rules with violence and usurps allegiance that belongs to God.”

Remarkably, like the beast of Revelation (Rev. 13:3), Belshazzar’s judgment is a death-blow, he was slain, “that very night Belshazzar king of the Babylonians was *slain and* Darius the Mede took over the kingdom at the age of sixty-two” (Dn. 5:30) [my italics]. Again, as in Revelation, the agent of Belshazzar’s slaughter is not mentioned. Yet, to add more force to his death, the verb “to slay” is used in the passive voice, which is a theological passive implying Yahweh as the agent. The slaughter of Belshazzar marks not only his end but also that of the Babylonian Empire. The coming of Darius the Mede in power is the “resurrection” of the beast and all its features in a different form. Babylon is gone, but the Babylonian spirit is still present even in the Medes. These empires may change their names yet keep the same essence. They remain a persecuting power against God’s people i.e., the community of faith.

6.3. THE SLAUGHTER OF THE BEAST IN REVELATION IS A PARODY OF THE LAMB.

That the Revelation’s beast is the travesty of the Lamb has been observed by many scholars. The slaughter of the beast should, therefore, be seen as parallel with the slaughter of the Lamb. In Revelation, both, the beast and the Lamb are brought into the scene in a similar manner, “... I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain” (5:6),¹⁵⁹ “[a]nd I saw a beast rising out of the sea,...One of its heads seemed to have a mortal wound, but its mortal wound was healed, and the whole earth marvelled as they followed the beast,” (13:1, 3).¹⁶⁰ Kraybill (2010:49) adduces that “[f]or devout Jews familiar with apocalyptic literature, and for Christians who knew their Old Testament, Rome became identified with the long string of beast-empires that usurped the role of God and sought to dominate the world.”

¹⁵⁸ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Dn. 5:2). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

¹⁵⁹ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Rev. 5:6). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

¹⁶⁰ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Rev. 13:1–3). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

It has also been widely assumed within the New Testament scholarship that the death-blow of one of the heads of the beast which is accompanied by its recovery (13:3) finds associations with the so-called *Nero Redivivus legend* of the first century (cf. Kraybill, 2010:65). Nero was such an evil and cruel Roman emperor and probably the foremost among the Roman emperors to persecute Christians, at least in the urban centre of Rome.¹⁶¹ Beale (1999:689) points out that

[p]ossibly the beast's resuscitation partly reflects the suicide of Nero in 68 A.D., followed by a year of civil war, in which the future of the Roman state was in question. It may have appeared that the beast was slain before Nero's death since it brought a dramatic decrease in the persecution of Christians.

When Nero committed suicide in AD 68, as noted by Kraybill (2010:65), the vast majority of people in the Roman world did not believe that he died. Some thought Nero moved and hid in the neighbouring cities with the strategy and intention of returning at a later stage to once again take over the empire. However, some still believed that though he died, and yet he would revive. This legend was popularized and spread throughout the Ancient Roman world towards the end of the first century, more especially in John's days.

History has it that after Nero's death, there was a cruel civil war. The ferocity of which put a great deal of doubt in many people's minds whether the Roman Empire would survive. Yet, to the surprise of many, the Roman Empire recovered from that political crisis to grow and became even more powerful. *This survival of the Roman Empire was a source of astonishment to many people.* This recovery could, thus, be the meaning John attached to the Nero redivivus legend.¹⁶²

¹⁶¹ For further reading see Gonzalez (1984:33-36) in the *Story of Christianity: The Early Church to The Dawn of Reformation (Volume 1)*.

¹⁶² Beale (1999:689, 90) highlights that "Vespasian solidified the empire once again so that it seemed that the Roman dragon had recovered. The strength of this apparent recovery was bolstered by rumours that Nero had not really died but was hiding, perhaps somewhere in Parthia, and would attempt to regain his rule once again. Asc. Isa. 4:2-14 identifies the end-time adversary as Nero, who will persecute the faithful." Paul (2018:231) also points out that "Many commentators see in this phrase an allusion to the myth of 'Nero Redivivus', which is more clearly suggested in Revelation 17 (see comment on 9:14); it was thought that Nero did not die in AD 68 but was still alive and would lead Parthian armies to invade from the east. But the phrasing suggests that the wound to the head caused the death of the *beast* and not just the death of the head, which might then allude to the civil war and year of four emperors following Nero's

Having indicated that Bauckham (1993:438) is probably right as he argues that “though to some extent the Nero redivivus myth somewhat influenced Revelation 13, it did not, however, dictate John’s whole theology of the beast.”

The myth was used and adapted to fit the writer’s agenda.¹⁶³ Also, having a “parallel” reading and approach to Revelation, the researcher believes that there is no single fulfilment, but transcendent principles and recurrent themes (cf. Gregg, 1997:43). Hence, the principle behind the death-blow of one of the beast’s heads and the recovery of its wound cannot and should not be restricted to the realities of the first century, even though that should be the starting point.

The similarities between the beast and the Lamb continue as we note that the LORD, God the Father is depicted in a sitting position on the throne (4:1, 9; 5:1, 7, 13), even so, the dragon is seen in a standing position on the seashore (13:1). The Lamb is, nevertheless, the one “standing” at the heart of the very throne on which God the Father sat.

His standing posture has to do with his resurrection.¹⁶⁴ The Lamb is directly connected to the throne of the Father. The throne becomes, therefore, the fundamental thing which links up the One who sat on it and the Lamb.

The beast was coming out of the very sea upon whose shore the dragon stood (13:1). The beast is also directly associated with the sea of the dragon. The sea *which* in the Ancient Near Eastern mind is the source of chaos, death and evil monsters (cf. Trail, 2008:34) is also the central thing which connects both the dragon and the beast. The Father and the Lamb have the throne as a common denominator, whereas the dragon and the beast have the sea as their common denominator. Patterson (2012:273) rightly adduces that

suicide in AD 68. The empire itself looked as though it might come to an end, but in fact had come back to life, in some ways stronger than before”

¹⁶³ Bauckham (1993:438) argues that “But we have found plenty of evidence that it is John’s creative thinking that controls his use of the Nero legend. He has used two quite different forms of it in chapters 13 and 17 in order to develop two quite different aspects of his understanding of the beast. Moreover, in both cases he has significantly reformulated the Nero legend. This supplied him neither with the idea of the beast’s miraculous recovery from a mortal wound nor with the idea of the beast’s reemergence from the abyss.”

¹⁶⁴ Trail (2008:137) puts it this way “QUESTION—what is the significance of showing the Lamb as standing? It indicates: that the Lamb was alive [Alf, EC, LD, Lns]; that he was ready for action [Lns, NIC]; that he had risen from death [NIGTC, Sw, WBC].”

Just as chap. 12 concludes with the dragon enraged against the woman and pursuing her offspring, so he is pictured in v. 1 as standing expectantly on the shore of the sea. Some versions place the chapter division after 12:18, but logically the NIV is correct to make that last statement a part of 13:1 because the beast that will arise from the sea is intimately connected to the dragon. Indeed, the dragon, which waits expectantly for him to the surface, summons him.

The Lamb had been slain (5:6), the beast too, had been slain (13:3). Three (3) *songs of worship* are carolled to the Lamb with the prominence that the Lamb was slain (5:9-10; 12, 13). Dalrymple reminds us that “[t]hrough the number three appears to have a variety of uses; it is consistently applied to God in the book of Revelation. This accords with the scriptural designation of God as Trinity—Father, Son, and Spirit.”

Nevertheless, four (4x) times the word worship is tied to the beast (13:4, 8, 12, 15). It has already been pointed out and as shown by Dalrymple (2018:72) that “[t]he number four (4) is consistently used throughout the book of Revelation to symbolically represent completeness about the creation and the world. This likely derives from the fact that the world naturally has four primary directions.” The four occurrences of the word worship in connection to the beast in Rev. 13 (vv. 6. 8. 12, 15) could possibly indicate that the beast seems to have gained popularity and the beastly worship has spread prolifically throughout the entire world.

The first time Revelation mentions the word worship in chapter 13 concerning the beast comes after underscoring the fact that the beast had a fatal wound which had been healed (13:3). This is as if to portray the marvel of the people as they follow the beast and worship. The latter is a direct consequence of the death and resurrection of the beast.

By his blood, the Lamb purchased persons from every tribe, language and people and nation with the sole purpose of serving (worshiping) our God (5:9) who is also “his God and Father” (1:6). The beast, on the other hand, also somewhat “bought” people to worship the dragon (13:4). The multitude who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb has no choice but to *follow* their redeemer, the Lamb wherever he

goes (7:17; 14:4). On the one hand, the commitment to faithfully follow the Lamb and to serve the LORD God, his Father is firmly because the Lamb was slain and is now standing at the centre of the throne. The whole world (13:8), which does not differ from the “inhabitants of the earth” (13:8) *followed* the beast, on the other hand. This commitment of the inhabitants of the earth to the beast is to some extent also because the beast was slain and the fatal wound had been healed.

Therefore, what can we discern from these observations? What do these remarks have to do with the research problem of this study? The main point this researcher wants to underscore with the comments mentioned above is the fact that the inhabitants of the earth have transformed the slaughter of the beast into worship and service rendered to the dragon and to the beast itself. Devotion, commitment and loyal service are the very things into which the book has transformed the traumatic events of the fatal wound and its recovery.

Looking at the below table (table #5), the matching between the Lamb and the beast in Revelation can hardly be denied.

What is fundamental to this comparison is the fact that the traumatic event packaged in the lexeme σφάζω does neither shut down the life of both the Lamb and the beast nor threaten their identity but instead identifies them. The Lamb is presented as *standing* [a picture of resurrection] at the centre of the throne. This throne is the very place where His Father sits. Whatever the throne represents is embodied in both the Lamb and his Father. The beast, on the other hand, is introduced as coming-out of the sea. His *coming out* is similar to the standing posture of the Lamb. Like a lamb, the beast shares the lineage and home with the dragon which is the sea. Thus, the connotation of death, chaos and disorder which comes along with the concept sea in the Ancient Near Eastern cultural mind is both intensely present in both the beast and the dragon.

Because the Lamb and the Father are both linked to the throne, they are both adored. The same applies to the beast and the dragon. They are both worshipped because of their link to the sea. The Lamb’s triumph has won a loyal following of his people. The beast is also followed by the inhabitants of the earth. At the core of this worship and loyal following is the fact that both the Lamb and the beast were slain but now they are alive.

6.3.1. A table of parallels of the Lamb and the beast.

The Lamb (Revelation 5)

The Beast (Revelation 13)

The Lamb is *standing at* the centre of the very throne on which the LORD God sat (5:6).

The beast *is coming out* of the very sea upon whose shore the dragon stood (13:1).

The *throne connects* both the Lamb and the One who sat on it, God the Father (5:1, 6).

The *sea ties* both the dragon and the beast (13:1).

The Lamb *had been slain, but now he is standing* at the centre of the throne—the death and resurrection of the Lamb (5:6).

The beast had been slain, and yet the fatal wound had been mended—the destruction and “resurrection” of the beast (13:3).

By his blood, the Lamb purchased persons from every tribe, people and language and nation *to serve his God, the Father* (5:9).

The beast had been slain, and hence “bought” all the world, i.e. the inhabitants of the earth *to worship the dragon*. The beast has authority over every tribe, people, language and nation (13:7).

*The traumatic event (being slain) is dramatically transformed into something positive — worship, loyalty and commitments. The mark of slaughter **defines rather than threatens the identity** of both the Lamb and the beast.*

The Lamb is worshipped together with the One who sits on the throne (5:13).

The beast is worshipped alongside the dragon (13:4).

Besides being worshipped, the Lamb is also followed by the redeemed from the earth, i.e. his people (13:3).

Besides being worshipped, the beast is also *followed* by the inhabitants of the earth (7:17; 14:4).

The Lamb has *triumphed*, and the object of his conquering is not mentioned (5:5).

The beast is *to conquer* the saints (13:7).

Table # 5

6.4. THE AGENT OF THE SLAUGHTER OF THE BEAST IS GOD THE FATHER.

Revelation uses the lexeme σφάζω in a passive voice in which the beast as the subject is the passive recipient of the action of slaughter. Though it has been historically alleged that Nero might have committed suicide, his death which to some extent is alluded to in Rev. 13:3 is, nevertheless, not pictured as actively performed. The subject is instead acted upon. This appears to be a theological passive (13:3) just as it is employed in each of the four occurrences with the Lamb in view.

This passive use, as indicated earlier on, seems to allude to the judgment also inflicted on Belshazzar, in which the agent is not explicitly stated, “that very night Belshazzar was slain” (Dan. 5). The agent of the killing of the beast is, therefore, likely to be the same as the one who slaughtered the Lamb, i.e. The Father. God, the Father slaughtered the beast. Beale (1999:687, 8) rightly maintains that “God must be the unmentioned agent of the beast’s “wound” (ἡ πληγή), since everywhere else in Revelation πληγή (usually rendered “plague”) is a punishment inflicted by God (so eleven occurrences and the cognate verb in 8:12).”

Remarkably, the slaughter of the Lamb has chiefly expiatory and substitutionary undertones, whereas the slaughter of the beast in Revelation and Belshazzar in Daniel is nothing more than God’s judgment inflicted upon them. Though the beast’s slaughter is predominantly a matter of God’s (the unmentioned agent) judgment, it has somewhat “bought” followers. This is the case, as already indicated in the previous section because the slain beast is presented as a caricature and parody of the slain Lamb. Barber (2005:173) points out that “[t]he beast is a kind of demonic parody of the Lamb. This is seen in the many parallels of the Lamb and the beast.”

6.5. THE SURVIVAL OF THE SLAIN BEAST IS ITS VERSION OF THE RESURRECTION.

In Revelation, the beast dies and “rises” again. Its death and “resurrection” are an imitation of the death and resurrection of the Lamb. In so far as the parody of the beast and the Lamb is concerned, the researcher’s interest focuses on the beast’s wound that though it appeared to be mortal had been healed (13:3). Therefore, two points receive emphasis, i.e., the fatality of the injury and the reality of its recovery. On this, Morris (1987:162) points out that

He [John] uses the expression *hōs esphagmenēn*, ‘as though slain’, which he used of the Lamb in 5:6, and as the recovery of the beast is clear there may be the thought of death followed by resurrection. This is one of several places in which the evil one is pictured as parodying Christianity.

The point that mainly stands out and makes the *whole world to marvel and eventually faithfully follows* the beast is the fact that one of its heads had been slain and its wound had been healed (13:4)—its death and resurrection. The beast had survived the death-blow. In chapter 17, the earth-dwellers will be astonished to see the beast because *it once was, now is not, and yet will come* (17:8). The phrase “the whole world” in 13:3 is an equivalent of the “inhabitants of the earth” in 17:8. A careful reading of chapters 13 and 17 shows that it is likely that in as far as the therionology (theology of the beast) is concerned, John is referring to the same event—the death and the resurrection of the beast.

However, in the elaboration of the Nero myth, Bauckham (1993:440, 1) contends that “[t]hus, the way in which John has adapted the two forms of the Nero legend in the interests of the theme of Christological parody strongly indicates that he understands the ‘resurrection’ of the beast in chapter 13 as a distinct event from his ‘Parousia’ in chapter 17.” So, according to Bauckham, in chapter 13, the focus is the resurrection of the beast, whereas, in chapter 17, it has to do with its Parousia. One presupposition on which Bauckham’s conclusion comes from is the fact that “[t]he theme of Christological parody indicates that John has constructed a *history* for the beast which parallels that of Christ. The beast, like Christ, has his death, his resurrection and his Parousia” (1993:437, 8).

The expression “one of the heads of the beast seemed to have had a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed” (13:3) appears nevertheless to have the same connotation as the phrase “[t]he beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to rise from the bottomless pit and go to destruction”(17:8).¹⁶⁵ For, in Revelation what explicitly causes the astonishment and eventually motivates the worship, either that of the Lamb or that of the beast is mainly the death and resurrection ideas rather than the Parousia.

¹⁶⁵ The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2016). (Rev. 17:8). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

We have shown that God's people worship and follow the Lamb primarily because he was slain. The inhabitants of the earth follow and worship the beast basically because it had a death-blow, and the wound has healed. Hence, in 17:8 "[t]he beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to rise from the bottomless pit and go to destruction,"¹⁶⁶ the "now is not" are portraying the fact that the beast seemed to have a fatal wound. For that reason, it [the beast] is not. The phrase "yet will come" likely means the same as "the fatal wound had been healed."

In 13:3 it is one head of the beast which seemed to have had a fatal wound, and the whole world was filled with wonder at the fact that the fatal wound had been healed even though it was 'fatal'. Yet in 13:12 unlike in 13:3, it is not just the beast's head but the beast as a whole, "the beast whose fatal wound was healed." The same applies to 17:3, where the focus is again on the beast as a whole. The inhabitants of the earth will be astonished to see the beast (not merely one of its heads). They will base their astonishment on the fact that this beast once was, now it is not, and yet it will come. There is, therefore, a sense in which the beast is likened to a Roman Empire king (17:11) while indicating what it means for the empire as a political entity. The head of the beast and the beast as a whole can be used interchangeably.

It is the death-blow and resurrection of the beast which attract the allegiance of its followers. Though the beast appears to be presented as a monster with some unusual features, these, however, do not seem to bring wonder nor to make the whole world (the inhabitants of the earth) follow it. But the death-blow and resurrection of the beast are what stand out and makes up a strong basis for the world to wonder and consequently follow it.

6.6. THE UNIVERSAL WORSHIP OF THE BEAST IS SOURCED IN ITS SLAUGHTER.

In Revelation, the rival worship of the LORD God is not only devoted to the dragon but also to one of its allies, i.e. the sea-born beast. John's Trinitarian theology is evident in his writings. It is apparent, especially in the so-called *Paraclete statements* recorded in the long discourse text of John's Gospel (13-16). While in Johannine Trinitarian theology, the Spirit is one of the members of the Godhead; it is

¹⁶⁶ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Rev. 17:8). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

clear in Revelation that worship is only addressed to the Father and the Lamb. Revelation 4-5 shows how much both the Father as the Creator and the Lamb as the Redeemer share in worship. In the Paraclete statements of John's Gospel, the Spirit's ministry is principally to point people to Jesus. However, it is the Lamb who is explicitly worshipped alongside the Father. The Son is sent by the Father, and yet the Spirit is sent by both the Father and the Son (cf. 15:26). This is an everyday Johannine Trinitarian theology.

Getting to the satanic trinity—the dragon (Rev. 12), the sea-born beast (Rev. 13:1-10) and the beast out of the land (Rev. 13:11-18)—the concept of worship operates similarly to John's Gospel. Just like the Father sends the Son in John's Gospel, so the beast is summoned and posted by the dragon in Revelation (12:17, 13:1). The beast works in the dragon's promotion. The beast out of the land, on the other hand, works in the name of the first beast. Like the Lamb who receives power from his Father, so too does the beast receive authority from the dragon (13:2).

As already described, just as both the Son [the Lamb] and the Father are worshipped in Rev. 4-5, so too are the dragon and the beast worshipped in Rev. 13:4 “, and they worshipped the dragon..., and they worshipped the beast saying...” Though the beast out of the land has some similarities with the Lamb (cf. 13:11), its role is, however, precisely the same as what the Spirit plays in John's gospel about Christ (John 14:26). Consequently, first in Revelation, the beast out of the land does not receive worship despite being a member of the satanic trinity. Second, as the Spirit bears witness to the Son (John 15:26) so the beast out of the land promotes the first beast (Rev. 13:12).

Now, the point this researcher would love to highlight is the fact that the death-blow of the beast, though traumatic, is transformative and receives “positive” undertones. It is the basis and motivating factor for the loyalty and worship of the beast by its followers. The marvel of the entire world and their commitment in *following* the beast are rooted in the fact that the beast suffered a fatal wound and survived it. Again, the term to “follow” is attached to the world's allegiance to the beast, just like the word is attached to community of faith's allegiance of to slain Lamb. The redeemed from the earth “follow” not the Father but the Lamb wherever he goes (Rev. 14).

Similarly, it is not said of the inhabitants of the earth that they “follow” the dragon, but the beast. This is not explicitly stated even though by implication by following the beast, the inhabitants of earth follow the dragon. The verb “to follow” connotes somewhat the same things as “to worship”. In Revelation “to follow” is used in connection to the allegiance and commitment given to the Lamb by his people and to the beast by the inhabitants of the earth. Paul (2018:231) helpfully points out that “the description of how they *followed the beast* uses the language of ‘coming after’ (*opisō*) which is used of Jesus in connection to discipleship (Mk. 8:33–34).” At the heart of the world following the beast is the fact that the latter was slain and the wound had been healed.

Traumatization is naturally implied in the lexeme σφάζω. But in Revelation, that phenomenon is transformed into something more positive in all the three dimensions. This is because in Johannine theology, traumatization embedded in the lexeme σφάζω is not portrayed as a menace to the Lamb’s identity (Christology), his followers (ecclesiology) and not even of the beast (therionology). It is paradoxically their identity marker.

Hence, the response is not to resist it but to accept and embrace it. In the same way, the traumatization’s undertones of the lexeme σφάζω do not threaten the identity of the beast, but it defines the beast. The slaughter and the recovery of the beast have attracted the loyalty and worship of its followers, i.e. the inhabitants of the earth.

6.7. THE SLAUGHTER OF THE BEAST IS ITS IDENTITY MARKER.

Of all the features of the beast, the outstanding one is the fact that it had died and risen again—that one of its heads has had a fatal wound, and the deadly wound has been cured (13:4, 12). It is apparent from the text that, like the Lamb, the beast has many other remarkable features. For instance, 13:1 describes the beast in terms of what it possesses, “ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems on its horns and blasphemous names on its heads.”¹⁶⁷ 13:2 describes the beast in terms of how it looks, “resembled a leopard, but...” These features designate something John’s

¹⁶⁷ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Rev. 13:1). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

readers would have been conversant with. This is more or less how the Roman empire of John's day would symbolically have looked.

Describing the first beast of Rev. 13:1-10, Kraybill (2010:41) articulates that “[b]izarre as this monster seems to us, it was recognisable to first century Jews who knew the Hebrew Scriptures.” He (2010:42) then points out that “[w]hile Daniel saw four beasts, John of Patmos sees a single beast that combines horrific characteristics of all four creatures in Daniel’s nightmare.” None of the characteristics of the beast influenced by the Danielic vision was surprising or peculiar to John of Patmos, nor his readers.

Still, what captivated the attention of the whole universe to the degree that it was filled with wonder and was finally persuaded to follow the beast is one of the beast’s contours, “one of its heads seemed to have experienced a fatal wound, and the fatal wound had been healed.” (13:3). This characteristic is, therefore, unique and is seemingly not drawn from the Danielic vision like the rest. This appears to be John’s theology. This death-blow is now applied not as something the beast has (possesses) but as what the beast is (identity). It is its identity marker. Like the Lamb, it is the beast who was slain.

Likewise, in Rev. 5, when the Lamb is introduced, he is presented to the seer with many features. However, what captivated the attention of the prophet the most (v. 6), and that of the twenty-four elders (v. 8), and that of the many angels (v. 11) and even the attention of every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea and all that is in it (v. 13), as underscored in their songs of worship is the fact that the Lamb was slain (v. 9, 12) and what resulted from that phenomenon. As with the Lamb, the reality of being slain is not merely something the beast possesses but is its identity marker — it defines who the beast is, i.e., the slain beast. Being slain is who the beast is.

The interrogative phrases, “who is like the beast? Who can wage war against it?” (13:4) convey adoration of the beast. They are the equivalent of the songs of worship which are carolled to worship the Lamb by the twenty-four elders, the many angels and every creature in 5:9-13. Those words in 13:4 are rhetorical questions, expecting negative answers—no one is like the beast, and no one can wage war against it.

These ideas denote worship of the people to the beast, “they worshipped the beast and asked...” (13:4). But what is it that makes the world worship the beast?

The beast is, hence, being worshipped because it is defined in Revelation as the rival of the Lamb’s worship. The worthiness of the Lamb’s worship is because he was slain, and by his blood, he purchased a people for God (5:9). Likewise, the beast is worshipped because one of its heads seemed to have been slain and yet that fatal wound had been healed. This is the primary motivating factor of beastly worship. The earth has been “bought” into beastly devotion and allegiance through and because it received a death blow and yet lived.

For this reason, when the beast is introduced in connection with the second beast in 13:12, the writer firstly refers to it in mathematical terms as the *first beast*. To be specific, he passes on to secondly identify it twice as “the beast whose fatal wound has been healed” (13:12, 14). Morris (1987:165, 6) highlights that “[t]he whole world is caught up in this worship of the beast, characterized again as the one *whose fatal wound had been healed*. This made a tremendous impression” [italics original]. There are so many things which the writer would have mentioned identifying the first beast: having seven heads, ten horns and crowns or having a body like a leopard, feet like a bear and mouth like a lion, all of these are unique to this beast in Revelation. There is no other character that has these unique characteristics.

Remarkably, none of those unique features of the beast is mentioned in 13:12, 14. For identification’s sake, John picks up only the fact that the beast was slain, and its wound has recovered. The beast is, therefore, best identified as the beast that was slain. The death-blow does not get out as a threat to the identity of the beast but is an inbuilt function of who the monster is.

When traumatization threatens one’s integrity, the instinctive reaction is resistance; only when it is understood as an identity marker, is the response acceptance.

This mark (13:3, 12), therefore, identifies the beast much better than anything else. Even John’s use of the idiomatic expression “it once was, now it is not, and yet it will come” on the beast as a whole in 17:8, probably serves to underscore its fatal wound and its healing. Though the deadly injury may have appeared to be so traumatic and threatened the identity of the beast, in fact, it does not. The trauma has been

transformed as a powerful instrument that causes the whole universe not only to wonder (13:3) and to be astonished (17:8) but also to follow, worship and pay allegiance to the beast (13:3).

6.8. THE BEAST'S IDENTITY MARKER IS RELATED TO THE MARK OF THE BEAST.

There is a rapport between the death-blow or the fatal wound portrayed in the lexeme σφάζω (13:3, 13) as the beast's identity marker and the mark of the beast 666 (13:17, 18). The first connection between the two is the fact that the beast whose mark is 666 is more or less related to Nero, whose death has much to do with the death-blow of 13:3 (cf. the Nero Redivivus legend). At several points, Kraybill (2010:65) argues "John seems to nudge the reader, as if to say, 'you can figure out exactly what I am talking about with this symbol.'" He goes on to point out that "such cues immediately come after John talks about the 'mark of the beast,' which John believes the people of the empire will soon be required to wear (13:18)."

Some scholars (cf. Bauckham, 1993:324-431; Kraybill, 2010:65-67) have made a solid case for Nero being the primary candidate for the beast of Revelation and for the number 666 as referred to Nerōn Kaisar (Νέρων κáισαρ) transliterated into Hebrew.¹⁶⁸ For instance, Barber (2005:171, 2) points out that

The "number of the beast" also points to Nero, since "666" is the numeric value of "Nero Caesar" in Hebrew. John's frequent transliteration of Hebrew words, such as "Abaddon" (Rev. 9:11), "Amen" (Rev. 3:14), "Armageddon" (Rev. 16:16), and "Hallelujah" (Rev. 19:1) demonstrate that the author of Revelation often "thinks" in Hebrew. Moreover, evidence that the early Christians saw "666" as Nero Caesar is found in the fact that other early manuscripts often changed the number to 616, which is the numerical value of Nero's name in Hebrew according to its Latin spelling.

Having stated that "[a]lthough it seems likely that John meant 666 to refer to Nero, we should not limit the meaning of the number of the beast or the symbol of the

¹⁶⁸ Wood (2011:131) in his *Simplifying The Number of The Beast (Rev. 13:18): An Interpretation Of 666 and 616* highlights and confirms that "[m]ore recent scholarship, however, seems to unite under the identity of the Emperor Nero as the key to unlock the number of the beast."

beast to one demented ruler” (Kraybill, 2010:67). For, once again, this researcher believes that there is no unique fulfilment in Revelation, but only transcendent principles and recurrent themes (cf. Gregg, 1997:43).¹⁶⁹ Hence, the researcher agrees with Barber (2005:171) that “... this beast does not only symbolize Rome. The ‘horns’ and the ‘heads’ are symbols of political authority (cf. Dn. 7:24; Rev. 17:9). Thus, Rome becomes a symbol for any state that turns away from God and persecutes His people.”

The second connection is the fact that the beast’s death-blow and the recovery of its fatal wound (13:3) has one fundamental thing in common with the mark of the beast (13:17, 18) which is *allegiance or worship*. That is to say, on the one hand, the death-blow and the recovery of the wound are, as we have already indicated, at the heart of the beastly worship and its following—the world marvels and begins to follow and worship the beast (13:3, 4). On the other hand, the mark of the beast, the 666 which is to be put on the right hand and the forehead of its followers represents allegiance and worship (cf. Kraybill, 2010:67). Observing the words, “[t]he LORD is our God, the LORD alone...” literally placed by some Jews in little boxes called phylacteries fastened on their hand and forehead, Kraybill (2010:68) indicates that “these are symbols of devotion to God.” It is from this background that the symbolism of the mark on the hand and the forehead come from especially regarding Deut. 6:4-9. It underscores the worship and allegiance of its followers.

The mark of the beast on the right hand and the forehead of its followers epitomise, therefore, worship which is governed by every *thought and action* (cf. Hendriksen, 2007:150; Kraybill, 2010:68; Beale, 1999:716). The name of the beast permeates the whole worship of its followers rooted because their object of worship “died” and “rose again.”

¹⁶⁹ Dalrymple (2018:72) observes that “To be clear: John’s use of numbers is not of first importance. One can read and understand the book of Revelation and its meaning without realizing the important role that numbers play in the construction of the book; we can see that the book is about Jesus and His victory through His death and resurrection and our call to imitate Him without ever noticing the role of numbers. John’s use of numbers does, however, serve to enrich, intensify, and deepen our understanding of the text.”

6.9. CONCLUSION.

The lexeme σφάζω as it is applied to the beast connotes its application as the book of Revelation enforces it on the Lamb. We have shown it that the passive voice function of the lexeme σφάζω on the beast in Revelation 13 is destined to portray the beast as a parody of the Lamb. The beast is the recipient of the action of slaughter. The performer of the action is, however, not mentioned in the text. This seems to be a divine or theological passive. Therefore, the unmentioned agent of the slaughter of the Lamb is the one who slaughters the beast, i.e., the Father. Second, what seemed to be traumatic to the beast, i.e., the death-blow, has been taken up as what the beast is best identified with. This means that the idea of the death-blow of the beast and its recovery indicates the beast's identity marker. It does not threaten the identity of the beast but defines it. The death-blow of the beast and the recovery from its fatal wound is at the heart of its worship. What was traumatic to the beast has been transformed into worship and becomes a significant reason for the entire world or the inhabitants of the earth to commit themselves to follow him.

CHAPTER 7: THE GENERAL CONCLUSION

7.1. INTRODUCTION.

This chapter brings this entire project full circle. It serves to build on the insights gained in the previous chapters as it briefly explores the Johannine use of the painful lexeme σφάζω in Revelation. Besides that, the researcher will also investigate how the Johannine use of the lexeme σφάζω applies to the life of individual believers and of the corporate Church of Christ across the globe and especially in the African setting. The chapter will provide, based on the findings of the previous chapters, a manner of perceiving and reacting to the phenomenon of traumatising, bearing in mind that the lexeme σφάζω is traumatic.

The principal purpose of this chapter is, to draw out the pastoral implications of Revelation's use of the distressing lexeme σφάζω, particularly, about both Jesus and the Church. This will best be achieved by summing up all the findings of the inquiry and attempting to serve the research question as we critique the role, meaning and use of σφάζω within John's central thesis. After that, we will elaborate on some pastoral implications of the inquiry.

7.2. OVERVIEW.

Chapter 1 posed the overarching research question: What does it mean for a suffering Church comprising of broken people that the One at the centre of the heavenly throne is presented to them as the Lamb looking as if it had been slain?

It is this pertinent question which then prompted the researcher to set off investigating the Johannine use of the lexeme σφάζω within the context of suffering in Revelation. Therefore, the primary purpose of this dissertation was an attempt to provide an answer to what could be the function of using the distressing lexeme σφάζω in the Apocalypse of John in relation to Christ presented as the Lamb who was slain and to the community of God's people depicted as being the suffering and slain followers of the slain Lamb.

To attend to the overarching question of this undertaking, chapter 2 tackled the first three levels of the diachronic and synchronic analyses of the lexeme σφάζω in

Greek. We gave the classical Greek uses of the lexeme σφάζω prominence followed by the Hellenistic uses of the lexeme σφάζω in the Septuagint (LXX) and its Old Testament setting. Chapter 2 closes with both the Hellenistic non-scriptural (or Koine) and the biblical usages of the lexeme σφάζω in the New Testament. Chapter 3 undertook to display a critical step of the synchronic study of the lexeme σφάζω in the Apocalypse of John.

There, three dimensions of the lexeme σφάζω—the Christological, ecclesiological and the therionological aspects — were identified, laid out and dealt with at a high level. The final three chapters of this undertaking were then each dedicated in length to each of these three (3) dimensions of the lexeme σφάζω, respectively.

7.3. SUMMARY.

In the summary of the findings of this study, it is chapter 2, which labours extensively on the predominance of the rational inquiry of σφάζω in Greek. The procedure of this analysis went up to the first half of the synchronic phase. However, the following summary is mostly a recap and paraphrase of the conclusions of each chapter of this work placed together into one coherent whole.

7.3.1. The classical use of the lexeme σφάζω focusing on Homer and Euripides.

The general and technical meaning of σφάζω in classical Greek usage with the focus on the works of Homer and Euripides denotes the killing of an animal by accurately cutting the throat often in a ritual setting. This implies that the very first thought one would come up with upon hearing this word is of a cultic killing, together with undertones of atonement and expiation of sins and appeasement of the gods. Σφάζω is not generally used for beheading, although sometimes it may describe the killing of a human by having their head cut off.

The sentiments of ritual sacrifices are most associated with the use of σφάζω. Yet, in classical Greek, the lexeme σφάζω is also a way of portraying the harsh and violent death of a human. But in the Old Testament, the killing of a human using σφάζω is predominately a deserved judgment against the enemies of Yahweh. By the first century AD, σφάζω could be used metaphorically, connoting the ideas of persecution and torment of a human. Though the sacrificial knife or the sword is most frequently

the instrument which comes to mind whenever σφάζω is used, at times the word could be used merely to signify more generally a brutal way of killing.

The vast majority of the time when σφάζω is applied, it is about the killing of a human in non-religious terms, i.e., it holds a connotation of mass murder. It is, therefore, genocidal in connotation (cf. Jgs. 12:6, 1 Kgs 18:40; 2 Kgs 9:6-10, see v.7 & v.14). The classic Greek handling of the term evolved from the killing and slaughtering of sacrificial animals (cf. Homer, 8th century BC) to including a savage and merciless killing of a human being mostly within a war context (cf. Euripides, 5th century BC).

These connotations are apparent even in the rabbinic writings, and other Greek classic nonbiblical corpora such as in Philo and Josephus. In a general sense, the word means killing by using a sword or a sacrificial knife. Many times, however, the word is applied in a more technical sense to mean killing by properly cutting the throat of the victims. Interestingly, in Homer, the word is used *exclusively for* the killing of animals in either a sacred or profane context. Homer does not use this lexeme about the killing of a human.

7.3.2. The use of the lexeme σφάζω in the LXX and its OT backdrops.

On the uses of the lexeme in the LXX and its O.T backgrounds, the *general* usage of the word is within a *ritual context of Yahwistic worship*. Animals are slaughtered by accurately cutting their throats and being sacrificed to Yahweh to express gratitude or to seek forgiveness from him. Whenever the word is used, the OT envisages the death of the victim.

The O.T makes use of the word by applying it to animals in ritual and profane circumstances, but to humans mostly in the sense of the secular killing. In most of these cases, the LXX uses the word as a judgment against the wicked or enemies of God. So, whether applied to an animal or a human in whatever context, be it ritual or profane, σφάζω *always has very traumatic feelings*. Even when used figuratively, it evokes alarming sentiments.

In fact, in the diachronic study of σφάζω, the lexeme takes root in the semantic domains of violence, harm, destroy and kill. It fits primarily within the sub-domain of a

kill. Semantically, the connotation of σφάζω is often that of a deliberate, ruthless and dreadful killing of either animals or humans. Whether used in a profane or sacred way, σφάζω is predominantly performed with a sword (μάχαιρα, sacrificial knife) by adequately cutting the throat of the victim. It is both traumatic and harrowing. Semantically, σφάζω falls into the category of physical injury rather than psychological harm. Persons or circumstances (cf. Louw & Nida, 1988:228) can cause this harm. Remarkably, the ritual use of the lexeme σφάζω regarding the killing of a human being is not frequent in the O.T, especially in Yahwistic worship.

The vast majority of ritual or sacred usage of the lexeme σφάζω is in association with animal sacrifices (cf. Leviticus). When applied to humans, the lexeme σφάζω is used in the LXX to express the justice and wrath of God by having His enemies killed mercilessly. It is in this sense Lk. 19:27 uses a cognitive term κατασφάζω to picture the terrible judgment of God against his enemies at the end of this age. Within the O.T context, the victim of this just retribution is invariably *a large number of masses*. This word σφάζω connotes a very severe and traumatic means of ending the life of a human being. Ironically, this could probably be one reason Homer uses it solely for animal ritual sacrifice and occasionally for food.

Whenever the act is condemned in the O.T, is an occasion in which the wicked have done damage to the innocent (cf. Isa. 57:5; Ez. 16:21; 23:39). This is the opposite of how it is used in Johannine writings (1 John and Revelation). John has always the faithful ones (the people of God, those on God's side) in view as victims of this terrible murder.

A human whether "good" or "evil" does not deserve to be slain in a way that associates their death with the lexeme σφάζω's sentiments. This idea corresponds to its use in Homer (cf. the Iliad & Odyssey). When applied to humans, at least those deserving to stand and be killed in the manner that σφάζω cognates in the LXX are predominantly wicked people, enemies of Yahweh or animal sacrifices.

7.3.3. The exceptional use of the lexeme σφάζω in the Psalms.

In the Old Testament corpus, the lexeme σφάζω is used once in the Psalms in regarding a righteous man as a victim of a wicked man (Ps. 37:14). This use of the term is an exception, though. However, it is this exceptional usage of the lexeme

σφάζω that matches John's. John would reasonably pick it up to trace the fate of Christ and that of Christians (the Lamb and his followers) both in 1 John and in Revelation. When painting the death of Christ to his sacrifice, John picks up the ritual aspect of the lexeme as the OT mostly uses it in Leviticus.

Based on the preceding, Christ, therefore, suffered and died the death of the wicked. This is the case because, in the LXX, evil people are the ones who experience this kind of death. Nevertheless, Christ's great suffering and traumatic death have been transformed as a potent reservoir and tool of healing and victory for God's people. It is, thus, an *identity marker* of the Lamb. The suffering and death of Christ with the purpose of this lexeme are paradigmatic of the agony, pain, suffering and killing of the saints in Revelation.

This transformation of trauma into healing, prophecy, victory, and comfort implies that Christians of the first century AD and all ages should embrace and accept their suffering and death as an integral component of their identity, at least in this gospel age and before the Parousia. These traumatic sufferings are not to be perceived as intruders, but an essential part of who we are by faithfully following the Lamb in this life.

7.3.4. The lexeme σφάζω in the New Testament corpora.

We identified three or four cognates of the term σφάζω. The New Testament corpus uses the noun σφαγή to refer first to the *place* (butchery) of the violent death of Christ (Acts 8:32). Second, it denotes Christians as *victims* of violent deaths (Rom. 8:36). Finally, it indicates the day or *occasion* of slaughtering (Jas. 5:5). The other cognate, κατασφάζω, is a verb used in connection with the killing of Christ's enemies on the last day (Lk. 19:27).

We also indicated that by AD 1, σφάζω could metaphorically mean, I torment/I persecute. In this sense, it has a connotation of severe suffering and terrible persecution without leading, necessarily, to the termination of one's life. For John, it is those belonging to the evil one who torment, persecute and kill the saints.¹⁷⁰ In

¹⁷⁰ The researcher is aware of those who rule out the persecution theory leading to the death of some Christians as the primary background of the Apocalypse. Johns (2003:127), for instance argues that "the crisis inscribed in the Apocalypse is primarily a *spiritual* crisis envisioned by John, but the resolution of the

Revelation, it is the beast and the “earth dwellers,” and Babylon that are the persecutors and murderers of the Church, the followers of the Lamb. In 1 John 3:12, it is Cain who performs this kind of dreadful killing of Abel.

Even in the N.T, the lexeme σφάζω means, therefore, a dreadful killing by adequately cutting the throat. Its use is sacred in which ideas of expiation, propitiation, and atonement probably overlap. In as far as the applicability of the lexeme is concerned, Revelation picks up the way the LXX uses it in Leviticus and the Psalms. The usage is both ritual and profane. The former has the death of Jesus Christ, the perfect and final sacrifice in view (cf. Lev. 1:5, 11; 3:2, etc.). Whereas, the latter has the death of Jesus’ followers in view (Ps. 37:14 cf. Pr. 9:2; 1 Jn. 3:12). In both, the lexeme has the common element of a dreadful, merciless and traumatic killing.

7.3.5. The three-dimensional occurrences of the lexeme σφάζω in Revelation.

In a quick survey of the occurrences of the lexeme σφάζω in Revelation, we noted that the lexeme σφάζω is central to John’s formulation of the doctrine of Christ, the doctrine of the Church and theology of the beast. For John, the lexeme σφάζω fittingly describes the *identity* of Christ and his followers. The four-time (4x) use of the lexeme in its application to the Lamb’s imagery (5:6, 9, 13; 13:8) is enough to persuade the reader always to have that in mind whenever the Lamb’s symbolism appears concerning Jesus in Revelation.

Using the lexeme σφάζω in describing the beast of Revelation (13:3) is ironic, as its depiction is as a parody of the Lamb. In Revelation, the definition of Christ’s identity and his role in the cosmos cannot be fully realised without this fundamental piece of Jesus’ identity as the Slain Lamb. Revelation uses the lexeme σφάζω in particular to describe the persecution of Christians, which in most cases leads to their horrible deaths.

The lexeme σφάζω applies to Jesus not only to highlight his identity but also to inspire courage, tenacity and endurance through many sufferings that Christians may undergo. The Jesus of Revelation is the slain Lamb (5:6, 8, 12) who is always

spiritual crisis would ironically induce a very real and dangerous social as the churches begun faithfully to resist the imperial cult and to face the consequences of their allegiance to Christ” [her emphasis].

followed by a suffering community of believers (6:4, 9) who are ironically persecuted and slain by a slain beast (13:3). John's selection of this lexeme to paint the cruel death of Christ is informed by the Levitical use of the term in the LXX, as it is applied to animals. In this, John explains the benefits generated from the death of Christ—the purchase of a community and the establishment of God's kingdom.

Using the lexeme σφάζω in Revelation is the opposite of some of its uses in the O.T corpus, particularly as it applies to human killing. In its application to human killings, the LXX uses it to depict the massacre of a large group of people with a connotation of judgment from God. The lexeme σφάζω depicts the cruel and atrocious killing of wicked people. Unlike the LXX, John's use of the lexeme is to paint the death of the Lord Jesus for salvific purposes, the formation of God's kingdom and the massacre of his followers. John's use of the lexeme matches its function in Ps. 37:14. The lexeme σφάζω has, therefore, a connotation that identifies well Jesus Christ and his followers. John applies it to the beast because he portrays the creature as the false Christ in Revelation.

In John's day, the lexeme σφάζω was mostly used to imply an illegal genocidal killing of a powerless population. Notwithstanding, for John, it is what happened to Christ and what continues to happen to Christ's followers that incorporate all that the lexeme connotes. Unless we bring in the lexeme σφάζω and its connotation, we cannot define who Christ is and who Christians are by following the slain Lamb.

The traumatisation which underscores the use of the lexeme σφάζω has dramatically been transformed into a tool of comfort in Revelation. The following sections are the summary dedicated to each of the three dimensions of the role of the lexeme in Revelation, starting with its Christological use.

7.3.6. The Christological use of the lexeme σφάζω in Revelation.

Chapter 4 dealt with the use of the lexeme at a Christological dimension. At the core of Revelation's Christology, Jesus Christ is primarily presented in kingship undertones. Though it is understandable that the Christ of Revelation is divine and shares the same titles with God the Father (cf. 1:8; 17), John introduces him in the first place and mainly as the King of God's kingdom in human terms. The vast majority of the titles given to Jesus in Revelation suggest and echo the O.T Messianic

expectations. Hence, it has been proven that when Jesus is designated as the Christ (ὁ Χριστός) in Revelation, it is to suggest that he is the human King whose role is to build God's kingdom. Hence, kingdom ideas are invariably connected to the mission and identity of Christ, the Messiah in Revelation. Collins (1992:704) points out that "[l]ike most of the other writings of the N.T, Revelation's most basic affirmation is that Jesus is the Christ, i.e., The Messiah (1:1, 2, 5)."

Revelation uses the terminology of "Son of Man" (ὅμοιον υἱὸν ἀνθρώπου) to label Jesus and so draw its readers to think of the Son of Man as he is presented in the book of Dn. 7:13-18 and not as the term is applied elsewhere in the O.T corpus. One of the reasons this is true is the juxtaposition of the concept of the Son of Man and the ideas that Jesus arrives 'with the cloud' in Rev. 1:7, 13.

A careful reader of Daniel will see that this juxtaposition in Revelation echoes Dn. 7:13-18. The other grounds are that the Son of Man in Daniel is divine and has the mission of receiving the everlasting kingdom from the Ancient of Days and is worthy of worship like the Apocalypse's Son of Man. Likewise, the one who is identified as the Son of Man at Rev. 1:13 is the one who introduces himself as the Son of God (ὁ υἱὸς θεοῦ) in 2:18—he is God and man. Thus, in Revelation, the appellation Son of Man (ὅμοιον υἱὸν ἀνθρώπου), like the title Christ (ὁ Χριστός), is related to the kingship of Jesus and his mission of building his everlasting kingdom.

The same point again and again was verified by looking at Jesus' other appellations in Revelation such as the Son of God, ὁ υἱὸς θεοῦ (2:8), the Lion of Judah, ὁ λεων ὁ ἐκ τῆς φυλῆς Ἰουδα (5:5), the root and the offspring of David, ἡ ῥίζα καὶ τὸ γένος Δαυὶδ (5:5, 22:6), the faithful witness, ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστὸς καὶ [ὁ] ἀληθινός (3:14), and the ruler of the kings of earth, ὁ ἀρχῶν τῶν βασιλείων τῆς γῆς (1:5). In the Apocalypse, all these Christological designations are meant to reinforce the same fact that Christ is the long-awaited Messiah and has the central role of founding and ruling over a kingdom that will last eternally.

The above designations, on the one hand, drove home the fact that Jesus is the King, the long-awaited Messiah who was to bring about all the hopes of the new age. The slain Lamb imagery, on the other hand, plays a vital, and a corrective purpose in all the designations above—it establishes *how* the O.T Messianic expectations were to be executed and realised. Without the slaughtering of the Lamb, which is

intentionally embedded in a loaded lexeme σφάζω, there would be no fulfilment of God's eschatological age.

The action of the King of God's people being slain as painted in the lexeme σφάζω was not merely a way through which God would bring about his purpose. However, it was *the only* means of fulfilling God's divine and redemptive plans for his people. For this reason, the slaughterer of the Son was the Father, as John always uses the theological passive of the lexeme σφάζω on the Lamb.

The slaughtering of the Lamb was not an afterthought, but God's eternal plan as it is written that the Lamb was slaughtered before the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8). So, by being slaughtered the Lamb has not only established a kingdom but has also purchased a people from all nations and made them kings and priests to serve his Father and to reign on earth (1:6; 5:9-10). So, for this reason, as already pointed out, the vast majority of Christological titles assigned to Jesus in Revelation points to his identity as king and his mission as the setting up of God's kingdom.

The slain Lamb metaphor is at the centre of the Christology of Revelation. For it points at *the best but surprising means* through which the role and mission of the Messiah are to be realised. Goldsworthy (1984:23) rightly argues that "through his suffering and death, the Lamb is the revealer of God." Therefore, the slaughter has become an integral part of Jesus' identity and a primary means of the revelation of God to humanity.

Though the lexeme σφάζω is used only four times (4x) for the Lamb imagery, the writer intended to make the reader always see the slaughtering marks as a part of who Jesus has become, and whom he will always be whenever the word Lamb metaphor appears in Revelation in the depiction of Jesus. For this cause, the lexeme σφάζω was not intended to create hopelessness or to traumatise the readers, but rather to induce them to worship Christ as they gaze upon its resulting benefits. His slaughter should, then, be accepted and embraced by the community of believers, not as an afterthought, but as the central composition of God's plan concerning whom his beloved Son would always be—the slain Lamb.

Thus, the lexeme σφάζω is the sine qua non and central to the depiction of Christ's identity and mission in Revelation. The traumatising, which is naturally loaded and connoted in the lexeme σφάζω, is theologically transformed into a powerful

therapeutic tool for the Church in Revelation's Christology. McDonald (1996:31) takes it for granted as she puts it "(against Luther and other worthies, ancient and modern) that the crucified Christ is central to the book of Revelation." To drive her point home, she (1996:31) points out that "[t]he following texts support such a position. The 'one like a son of man' (1:13) introduces himself as 'the first and the last, the one who lives. Once, I was dead, but now I am alive forever and ever' (1:18). The Lamb is presented in 5:6 as 'a Lamb that seemed to have been slain,' hymned as such in 5:12, and reintroduced in 13:8 as 'the Lamb who was slain.'"

Subsequently, the fact that the Son of God (ὁ υἱὸς θεοῦ) is presented as the slain Lamb since he is also the Son of Man (ὅμοιον υἱὸν ἀνθρώπου) is neither a subject of grief nor a question of lament but rather a subject of great joy and should motivate worship of Jesus in the people of God. This worship is crafted into powerful choruses carolled by the community of worshippers and the angelic beings. The worship is dedicated to the second person of the Trinity, Jesus, the Son of God (Rev. 5).

7.3.7. The ecclesiological use of the lexeme σφάζω in Revelation.

Much of the use of the lexeme σφάζω at the ecclesiological dimension was made in chapter 5. The slaughter of the saints emanating from the lexeme σφάζω is naturally introduced in Revelation as a horrible, malicious event which occurs to them as they follow the Lamb wherever he goes (Rev. 14:4). We established this truth after a thorough inquiry, especially for the first and the second occurrences of the lexeme σφάζω with the Church in view (6:4, 9-11). The "little longer" of 6:10 is the time frame in which the identity of the Church is defined by the events of suffering and slaughter. This time frame is the equivalent of the 1260 days and the 42 months of sections 8-11 and 12-14.

For this cause, the response appealed to in the Christian who seemed to be advocated in Revelation about such consequences is not resistance but acceptance. These traumatic events are, in fact, under God's sovereign control since the power to take peace out of the earth *was given* to the rider of the red, fiery horse (6:4). The rider of the fiery horse does not own this power. The traumatic event embedded in the lexeme σφάζω is, thus, to be adopted by the community of the people of God because in Revelation such an event, is not only under God's sovereign control, but

is an effect which has also been paradoxically transformed into a powerful instrument of victory for God's people.

In Revelation, traumatisation, as it is presented in the lexeme σφάζω, is staged neither as an alien nor as a threatening event to the identity of the followers of the Lamb, but as a function of their very identity and missionary work, especially in this "little longer" time frame. It is only when trauma is perceived as an alien and a menace to our integrity, the answer would be either violent or non-violent resistance.

However, a violent or non-violent resistance theology does not seem to be what Revelation is advocating for the believing community, particularly as far as the use of the lexeme σφάζω is concerned. The community of believers is instead called to take on the traumatisation, which happens to them as the consequence of their holding to the testimony of Jesus (Rev. 6:9-11). Preserving the testimony of Jesus is central to the Church mission in Revelation. Revelation recommends the resistance approach only against Greco-Roman idolatry and false teaching which infiltrated the Church in various forms.

John designates the believing community as a church or churches in Revelation in its first section (1-3). Using that designation, we highlighted the universal scope of the community of the people of God. The heptad lampstands of the first section of Revelation (1-3) are reduced to two lampstands in the third section (8-11) to designate the whole community of the people of God as two prophets/witnesses. This reduction is because of the different emphasis on the identity, and particularly the Church's missionary work. As two lampstands, the attention is now on the trustworthiness of the testimony that the community of believers hold in this universe.

Looking at the Church in Revelation, it was argued that as a community of God's people, the Church was freed from their sins to serve God. They serve God as a holy, apostolic and prophetic community. The central mission of the Church in Revelation is to maintain the testimony of Jesus. This testimony of Jesus is what is known as the word of God in Revelation. In holding the testimony of Jesus, the community of believers is demonstrating its *raison d'être*.

It is by her mission and nature that the Church will continue to be a slaughtered community. The lexeme σφάζω is used to denote some developments in the life and mission of the Church. The first occurrence of the lexeme σφάζω (Rev. 6:4) presents

the massacre of the people of God in general terms with some ambiguities and without many details. The point of this ambiguous occurrence was to depict the slaughtering of the people of God as a malicious and brutal act happening among humans. The people of God are human beings who are being brutally slain by their fellow human beings. In this first occurrence, the slaughter of the people of God is not a consequence of natural evil, but a malicious and moral evil perpetrated by people with whom they share humanity.

The second occurrence of the lexeme σφάζω (6:9) which also has the Church in view lays bare some details which were “missed” in its first occurrence. Here, the identity of the victim is explicitly stated: that is the souls of those who were slain because of their mission—maintaining the testimony of Jesus. It is here we are informed that their blood will be avenged. The blood of the Lamb whom they follow is never avenged in Revelation. In the second occurrence of the lexeme σφάζω, the culprits of the slaughter of God’s people are equally and explicitly identified as “inhabitants of the earth”. In the third occurrence (18:24), the justice that was promised and delayed in the second occurrence (6:10) has now come to pass. The perpetrators of the slaughter of the people of God are eventually brought to book.

The slaughter of the people of God is, therefore, one of the major features with which they are identified on earth as the followers of the slain Lamb before the Parousia. God’s people are not to resist it in any way, but rather accept it as part of who they are by following a slain Lamb. Their slaughter, though traumatic, has been transformed in Revelation as prophecy, as an integral part of their mission and as unexpectedly how they overcome the world.

7.3.8. The therionological use of the lexeme σφάζω in Revelation.

The lexeme σφάζω also has a therionological dimension as it is applied to the theology of the beast and the beastly worship in Revelation. Here the lexeme causes the same connotation as it is enforced on the Lamb. The passive voice function of the lexeme σφάζω on the beast in Revelation 13 is meant to portray the beast as a parody of the Lamb. The beast is the recipient of the action of slaughter. The performer of the action is, however, not mentioned in the text. This appears to be a divine (theological) passive, as in its Christological use.

Therefore, the unmentioned agent of the slaughter of the Lamb is the same as the one who slaughtered the beast, i.e. the Father. Second, what seemed to be traumatic for the beast, i.e. the death-blow, has also been used to demonstrate what the beast is best identified with. Sticking with the parody motif, this means that the death-blow of the beast and its recovery are its identity marker. The wound does not threaten the identity of the beast, but instead somewhat defines it. The death-blow of the beast and the recovery of its fatal wound are at the heart of its worship. What was traumatic to the beast has been transformed into its worship and becomes a significant reason for the inhabitants of the earth to commit themselves to follow it.

7.4. TENTATIVE ANSWER TO THE RESEARCH PROBLEM.

The Johannine use of the lexeme σφάζω (I slaughter, I slay) in the context of suffering in Revelation has not been easy to identify. The difficulty is because “as readers, we do not determine the meaning of biblical words; rather, we try to discover what the biblical writer meant when he used a particular word” (Duvall & Hays, 2012:163). Hence, after a thorough inquiry, it was established, that Revelation uses σφάζω not as a threat to one’s identity, but as an identifying marker for both the Lamb and his followers, and even for the beast.

As far as the theology of Revelation is concerned, John does not depict the slaughtering marks on the Lamb as a stigma. In the Apocalypse of John, sentiments of shame and humiliation which are usually associated with the lexeme σφάζω have been theologically transformed at both Christological and ecclesiological dimensions (even at therionological dimension) into a potent reservoir and phenomena of therapy for the slain community.

This reading of the lexeme σφάζω in Revelation is relatively close to the psychodynamic approach to trauma treatment, as it is explained by Seegobin (1999:890). This approach argues Seegobin (1999:890) “focuses on altering destructive attributions and reinterpreting the experience and involves the gradual confrontation of the patient’s feeling of shame, helplessness, and vulnerability.” In Revelation, all the negative attributions that are fundamentally tied to the lexeme σφάζω such as pity, loss and humiliation have been dramatically and theologically altered and transformed.

John is, therefore, not expecting his readers to alienate themselves from suffering and traumatising as they connotes it in the lexeme σφάζω and in whatever they associates the lexeme with. Jesus and his followers are well identified with the traumatising, which implies the use of the lexeme σφάζω. The central question of this thesis, therefore, was “what does it entail for the community of faith during, or envisaging suffering and slaughter that the One on the throne, the One to whom they all look up to is presented as the slain Lamb?” Does this imagery enhance the traumatising of God’s people? Does it evoke feelings of desperation and hopelessness?

That Revelation underscores traumatic events permeated in the usage of the lexeme σφάζω not so much as something that has *happened* to the Lamb and his followers but pointing to who they are and who they have become (Slain Lamb and the Slain Church) is a fascinating phenomenon worth investigating. Slaughter (or slaughtering marks) is neither an intruder nor an alien event which could jeopardise the identity of either the One at the centre of the throne or of his followers, the community of faith.

The slaughter did not just *happen to* the Lamb, but it is who the Lamb is—He is the slain Lamb. The slaughter, no matter how traumatic it may sound, defines the Lamb and his Church. Precisely, like the sacraments (water baptism and the Lord’s Supper), though traumatic, have been powerfully transformed into something positive which the whole community of faith embraces, upholds and rejoices in. Likewise, the purpose of the lexeme σφάζω on both the Lamb and his followers in Revelation is as a positive rather than a negative thing. John, therefore, meant well by painting the hero of the book as the Slain Lamb to his followers. The connotation which is theologically infused into the role of the lexeme σφάζω in Revelation is paradoxically therapeutic rather than traumatic.

It is this transformation motif which demands acceptance of traumatising rather than violent or non-violent resistance. At the Christological level, the lexeme σφάζω has been theologically transformed into prophecy, victory and the redemption of God’s people and worship of Jesus (Rev. 5). Songs of worship are addressed to the Lamb primarily because, in his humanity, he is the slain Lamb. Revelation has also transformed the lexeme σφάζω into life (Rev. 13:8). The Book of Life is described as such because the Lamb was slain before the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8).

Here we have a juxtaposition of the traumatic event of the slaughter of the Lamb and life which results from it. McDonald (1996:31) helpfully adduces that:

The Christian understanding of how God works runs counter to almost all of our human instincts, which is why New Testament writers are trying hard (against the odds) to hold on to the central insight of *the crucified Christ*. There is something profoundly paradoxical in the idea that salvation comes through the death of a convicted criminal; we do not think of human achievements as coming about in this kind of way. We achieve through action, not passion (at least, we think we do) [my italics].

For this reason, McDonald refers to 1 Cor. 1: 23-25 to highlight the same attitude in Paul's mind showing how the *crucifixion* of Christ no matter how traumatic it might have sounded, has overwhelmingly and paradoxically been transformed into wisdom and strength (cf. McDonald, 1996:31).

At the ecclesiological level, the traumatisation of God's people is dramatically transformed into victory, healing and coping with any suffering and an excellent motivation for missions. That the Church should resist idol worship promoted by imperial worship is a clear teaching of Revelation. However, the trauma that comes along with this resistance is not to be avoided but accepted and endured. Through the use of the lexeme σφάζω of all dimensions in Revelation, John is advocating for the acceptance of traumatic events ironically as a part of healing. Members of the community of faith are told not to protest, but to wait for their comrades who are to be slaughtered like them (Rev. 6:9-10). Here, justice is not denied but delayed because the slaughter of the Church serves a good cause, at least in this world.

Ganzevoort's (2008:19, 20) submission on the concept of identity in his article *Scars and Stigmata: Trauma, Identity and Theology* is that "identity is taken here as the narrative construction of who the person is vis-à-vis her or his life course and vis-à-vis other persons or a story that one tells about one's self," is startling. Following up on that, it seems in Revelation that there is no way one can tell a thorough and comprehensive story about Jesus and his Church vis-à-vis their own lives and vis-à-vis the community of non-believers without the central piece of suffering and slaughter of both Jesus and his followers.

7.5. PASTORAL IMPLICATIONS.

Ganzevoort (2012:438) rightly points out that “[i]n theology, we are just starting to consider seriously that trauma is indeed such a central concept.” Hence, this work has so far been an endeavour to comprehend the distressing lexeme σφάζω in the Apocalypse of John in relation to Christ and the community of God’s people. There have been many responses to traumatic events, as highlighted by Ganzevoort (2008:22-23). However, it is worth repeating at this point that the lexeme σφάζω applies to Jesus not just to highlight his identity, but also to inspire courage, perseverance and endurance through any suffering Christians may undergo.¹⁷¹

For this reason, we should inculcate the community of believers that traumatic experiences are a component of the human experience and something they should always expect and cope with (cf. Rev. 6:10); that the most traumatic event in history was the death of the Son God as stated in the distressing lexeme σφάζω. On the one hand, Mack (2004:91) reminds us that “responding to the stressors of life is rather a serious matter.” On the other hand, Ganzevoort (2008:24) poignantly points out that “[f]inding some kind of religious meaning in suffering can be an important element in making the transitions from position one to position two, from resistance to acceptance, from scars to stigmata.”

7.5.1. Christian suffering and the sovereignty of God.

If the death of God’s people as portrayed in the use of the lexeme σφάζω in Revelation is entirely under God’s absolute control, then all kinds of suffering that happen to the community of God is by implication only under his permission and sovereignty. It is clear in Rev. 6:10 that the killing of the saints is an ongoing action in

¹⁷¹ Collins (1992:407) adduces that “In addition to the tensions between these social groups, Revelation reflects particular events that were traumatic for the author of Revelation and those who shared his point of view. The Jewish War with Rome and the destruction of the temple was a traumatic event, as the use of the name “Babylon” for Rome shows. That Nero’s police action against Christians in Rome was perceived in a similar way is indicated by the use of Nero redivivus as the eschatological adversary. We may infer that the enthusiastic performance of the imperial cult in the province of Asia was deeply offensive from the antithetic parallel drawn between worship of God and worship of “the beast.” Finally, the death of Antipas and the exile of John, the author of the book of Revelation, were events that emphasized the threatened situation of the Christian communities in the province. The theology and Christology of the book of Revelation are shaped by these elements of crisis and trauma.”

this lifetime but does not escape God's sovereignty. Having this perspective is an incredible comfort when coping with traumatic scenarios. On this, Mack (2004:91) points out that "to win this battle over the stressors of life, you must deliberately see everything that happens to you within the framework of the sovereignty of God." God's sovereignty is underscored for the traumatic killing of people as expressed in the use of the lexeme in 6:4, 9-10. God gives the rider of the red horse the power to take peace out of the earth, resulting in a state of affairs in which the people of God are being massacred. This is God's sovereignty.

Reflecting on the words of the Lord Jesus in Matt. 10:29 which vividly highlight that "not even a sparrow dies apart from God's will" Mack (2004:92) contends that "the point of this passage is not simply that God *knows* when a sparrow dies. Rather, Jesus is saying much more than that: He is asserting that a sparrow does not die unless it is the will of God that it should expire" [my italics]. If the horrible and frightful death of the community of faith as depicted in the distressing lexeme σφάζω is never out of, nor beyond God's control, how much more then, the suffering of God's people which may or may not lead to death?

God is entirely in control of the pain and demise of his people as it is apparent in all three occurrences of the lexeme σφάζω with the Church in view (6:4, 9-11; 18:24). Still on Mat. 10:29, Mack (2004:92) argues that "[b]y saying this, our Lord Jesus Christ wants us to know and be comforted by the fact, that if God is involved with the *death of* something as insignificant as a sparrow, He is certainly involved in, and vitally concerned about, everything that happens to his children" [my italics].

In the Apocalypse, John is not speaking merely about any death, but the death which is so atrocious and utterly inhuman. Yet, God is concerned about it, and it fully involves him as he permitted his or some of his people to experience it (cf. Rev. 6:10). We should perceive all this suffering through the lenses of the throne of the Creator and the Redeemer, the dominion which rules over all human affairs, including the pain and vicious death of his people (cf. Rev. 5).

7.5.2. Christian suffering transformed as a tool of comfort.

It is not just the notion of God's sovereignty which helps the community of faith to cope with our traumatic human problems. Much more than that, the trauma of God's

people is foremost their identity marker, just as it is for their Lord, the slain Lamb. Second, as the followers of the Slain Lamb, they transform their traumatisation into something much more positive and therapeutic.

Trauma or stress, in particular, is popularly perceived as “the normal protective response of the body to a perceived *significant threat to the status quo*” (Foyle, 2001:28) [my italics]. Now, in Revelation, John does not advocate the perception of trauma as a significant threat, especially in as far as the use of the lexeme σφάζω is concerned. Revelation, with its theology constructed around the lexeme σφάζω, does not promote traumata from the standpoint of significant threat, but as an identity marker. Hence it is to be accepted. For Ganzevoort (2008:20),

Trauma can be described as the psychological wound resulting from the confrontation with a serious event that shatters a person’s integrity and induces powerlessness and estrangement. Contrary to the common parlour, trauma is not the event as such, but the impact of the event on the person [my italics].

In Revelation, the shock of the traumatic event as connoted in the lexeme σφάζω on the person of Jesus (slain Lamb) and the community of believers (slain Church) has been vividly transformed into something which determines who they are rather than threatening and shattering their identity down.¹⁷² As designated by the value of this research, because of a rise in conflict, wars, and political unrest, particularly in Africa there is a developing concern for a message of healing, hope, encouragement and consolation. In its theology of the lexeme σφάζω, Revelation offers one.

Trauma, according to Abi (1999; 129-130) is “[a] certain event, force, or mechanism that causes malfunction or severe personal damage.” We can perceive this whenever the suffering and deaths of Christ and his followers are mentioned in Revelation in the depiction of the lexeme σφάζω. The “elements of terror, humiliation, impairment, and pain” as pointed out by Abi (1999-129) are rooted in the application of the lexeme to the Lamb and his followers, even to the beast. However, these elements are fundamentally alerted and reinterpreted. Revelation, therefore, does not suggest to its readers the association of the harmful elements of

¹⁷² For further reading on the phenomenon of trauma and its various healing approaches, the researcher recommends Borchert, G. L. (2002: 53–55); Craigie, F. C., Jr. (1999:42). Wilson, W. P. (1999:72). Newhouse, C. (2011:19). Chuang, A. M. (2015:37–40; Harrower, S. D. (2018) and Smith, R. S. (2017:103).

terror, humiliation, impairment and pain in as far the theology of the lexeme σφάζω is concerned.

Human civilisation, and especially in Africa, has inculcated and promoted in mortal human beings a culture of violence as the popular response to a traumatic issue. Our fallen nature teaches us that violence is a glorious thing to perform. Yet, it is historically proven that further violence can never break the circle of violence. Semantically, the lexeme σφάζω falls into the category of *physical violence*, harm and kill. In Revelation, the violence ideas which permeate the suffering and deaths of the community of faith in the use of the lexeme σφάζω should be reacted to with acceptance rather than with yet another violent response.

The primary reason for this approach is twofold: (1) the most extreme traumatic event as painted in the lexeme σφάζω does neither shatter down nor threaten the identity of the Lamb and his followers, but functions as an identity marker; (2) the traumatic experiences have theologically been transformed and attributed many positive meanings such as victory, salvation and so on. Hence, these new meanings and this perspective and approach provide a great reservoir and an excellent tool for coping with traumatising of any nature.

Thus, in as far as the theology of the lexeme σφάζω is concerned in Revelation, acceptance rather than violent and non-violent resistance is a Christian response to traumatic events, at least in this interim period. At the end of this age, God will deal with the culprit of the killing of God's people (Rev. 18:24). This approach to scars and traumata may appear simplistic to some sceptical minds, but in fact, it is not. It is God's wisest way of overcoming extreme evil.

The Jesus of Revelation can never be considered apart from the past traumatic experiences of his suffering and death. The slaughter of the Lamb is the dominant element of the Revelation's Christology. The same applies to the Church that follows the Lamb wherever he goes. These individual believers cannot conceive of themselves without these traumatic experiences described in 6:4, 9; 18:24, even if they attempt to exclude them (cf. Ganzevoort, 2008:5). There is no ecclesiology proper in Revelation without the notion of σφάζω in being a slaughtered community of faith. The implication is not necessarily a call for individual believers to rejoice in these malicious events of their suffering and slaughtering. However, individual

believers should acknowledge that these traumatic events of pain and being slain are crucial within the life course in which they define their identity (cf. Ganzevoort, 2008:5).

Lament is a response to traumatic experiences. In Rev. 6:10, the victims of slaughter express a lament and cry for retribution. Lamenting before the just God and seeking justice from him is one response a member of the community of faith can perform. It is one of the least things Scripture recommends them to do. Their call for justice is a sign that what occurred to them was a malicious, moral evil.

Justice applying to their appeal is delayed but not denied. God promises judgment against their enemies. It will be attended to at the end of this age as we see in Rev. 18:24. Only in this interim time (a “little while” cf. Rev. 6:10) the attitude and response of God’s people to such traumatic experiences should be revisited and reoriented. Malicious events which frequently happen to members of the community of faith in their missionary tasks should now not be considered as alien or as intruders in their lifetime.

This understanding should, therefore, inform the response of the believing community concerning the experience of suffering of any kind. These traumatic experiences are equally part of the life course of the believing community. They call individual believers to ascribe meaning to them (cf. Ganzevoort, 2008:5). These meanings are the ones which John wants his readers to hold on to and integrate into their framework of understanding to explain their traumatic experiences and realities. As we do not define the Church in Revelation outside of the traumatic events of the slain Lamb, then neither are individual believers as they undergo suffering and even dying. The universal and militant Church of Christ is what she is, [especially in this interim time] because of the traumata they and their Redeemer have suffered (cf. Ganzevoort, 2008:5).

WORKS CITED

- Abi, N.H., 1999. Trauma. (*In* D. G. Benner & P. C. Hill (Eds.), Baker encyclopedia of psychology & counselling (2nd ed.). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books).
- Alford, H., 1980. Alford's Greek testament: an exegesis and critical commentary (Vol. 4). Grand Rapids: Baker.
- Arndt, W.F., & Gingrich, F.W., 1958. A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature. London: University of Chicago Press.
- Aune, D. E., 1997. Revelation 1–5. Dallas: Word Books.
- 1998. Revelation 6–16. Nashville: T. Nelson.
- 1998. Revelation 17–22. Nashville: T. Nelson.
- Averbek, E. R., 1996. 3180 טבח. (*In* VanGermes, W. A. eds. New International Dictionary of the Old Testament theology & exegesis, Volume 2. Carlisle: Paternoster Press. pp., 334-336).
- 1996. 8821 טחש. (*In* VanGermes, W. A. eds. New International Dictionary of the Old Testament theology & exegesis, Volume 4. Carlisle: Paternoster Press. pp., 77-80).
- Bachmann, T.E., ed. 1960. Luther's work, Volume 35: word and sacrament I. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.
- Barr, J., 1961. The semantics of the biblical language. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Barr, D. L., 2013. John is not Daniel: the Ahistorical Apocalypticism of the Apocalypse. *Perspectives in Religious Studies*. 40 (1), pp., 49-63.
- Barber, M. 2005. Coming Soon: unlocking the book of Revelation and applying its lessons today. Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Road Publishing.
- Bauckham, R. J., 1978. Tudor apocalypse: sixteenth-century apocalypticism, millenarianism, and the English Reformation: from John Bale to John Foxe and Thomas Brightman. London: Sutton Courtenay Press.

- 1993. *The theology of the book of Revelation: New Testament theology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- 1998. *The fate of the dead: studies on the Jewish and Christian apocalypses*. Boston, MA: Brill.
- 1998. *The climax of prophecy: studies on the book of revelation*. Edinburgh: T & T. Clark.
- Beale, G. K., 1999. *The book of Revelation: a commentary on the Greek text*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- Beasley-Murray, G. R., 1981. *Revelation*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Beckwith, I. T., 1967. *The Apocalypse of John*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.
- Blanchard, J., 2013. *The hitch-hiker's guide to heaven*. Grand Rapids, MI: EP Books.
- Bock, D. L., 2006. *Lexical analysis: studies in words*. (In Bock, D. L. & Fanning, B.M., eds. *Interpreting the New Testament Text: An introduction to art and science of exegesis*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books. pp., 135-153).
- Botha, J., 1990. *Semeion. 'n inledin to die interpretasie van die Griekse Nuwe Testament*. Pretoria: NG Kerkuitgewery.
- Borchert, G. L., 2002. *John 12–21 (Vol. 25B)*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.
- Bowman, R. G., 2007. *Narrative criticism: human purpose in conflict with divine presence*. (In Yee, G. A., ed. *Judges & Methods*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press. pp., 19-45).
- Bromiley, G. W., ed. 1985. *Theological dictionary of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Brown, F., 1906. *A Hebrew and English lexicon of the Old Testament*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Brooks, R., 1990. *Revelation: the Lamb is all the glory*. Darlington: Evangelical press.

- Bruce, F. F., 1979. The book of Revelation. (*In* Bruce, F.F.. ed. The New International Bible commentary. Grand Rapids: Zondervan. pp., 1593-)
- Bultmann, R., 1955. The theology of the New Testament. New York: Scribners.
- Burkett, D., 1999. The Son of Man debates: a history and evaluation. Cambridge: University Press.
- Caird, G. B., 1966. The Revelation of Saint John. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers.
- 1984. A commentary on the revelation of St. John the Divine. London: A & C Black.
- Cavanaugh, W. T., 1998. Torture and Eucharist: theology, politics, and the body of Christ. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers.
- Charles, R. H. A., 1920. A critical and exegetical commentary on the Revelation of St. John: the international critical commentary. Endinburg: T & T Clark.
- Chuang, A. M., 2015. War Torn. *Christianity Today*, 59 (5), pp., 37–40.
- Clowney, E. P., 2013. The unfolding mystery: discovering Christ in the Old Testament. Phillipsburg: P & R Publishing.
- Coleman, R. E., 1980. A new perspective on Revelation songs of heaven. New Jersey: Power Books.
- Collins, A. Y., 1984. Crisis & catharsis: The power of the Apocalypse. Philadelphia: Westminster Press.
- 1992. Book of Revelation. (*In* D. N. Freedman (Ed.), The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary. New York: Doubleday).
- Collins, J. J., 1979. Apocalypse: the morphology of a genre. Missoula, MT: The society of biblical literature.
- 1997. The Dead Sea Scrolls: Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls. London: Routledge.
- Cotterell, P. & Turner, M., 1989. Linguistics & biblical interpretation. Great Britain: SPCK.

- Corsini, E. 1983. *The Apocalyps: the perinial revelation of Jesus Christ*. Wilmington, D: Michael Glazier, Inc.
- Craigie, F. C. Jr., 1999. *Acute Stress Disorder*. (In D. G. Benner & P. C. Hill (Eds.), *Baker encyclopaedia of psychology & counselling* (2nd ed.). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books).
- Daly, R. J., 2009. *Apocalyptic thought in early Christianity*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.
- Danker, F.W., 1979. *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature*. London: University of Chicago Press.
- Dalrymple, R., 2018. *Follow the Lamb: A Guide to Reading, Understanding, and Applying the Book of Revelation*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.
- Decock, P. B., 2004. The symbol of blood in the apocalypse of John. *Neotestamentica: New Testament Society of Southern Africa*, 38 (2). pp., 157-182.
- DeClaisée-Walford, N., Jacobson, R. A., & Tanner, B. L., 2014. *The book of Psalms*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- DeSilva, D. A., 2000. *Honour, patronage, kinship and purity: unlocking New Testament culture*. Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity.
- 2009. *Seeing things John's way: the rhetorical of the book of Revelation*. Louisville, KY: John Knox Press.
- De Klerk, B. J. & Van Rensburg, F. J., 2005. *The making of a sermon: a practical guide to reformed exegesis and preaching*. Potchefstroom. Potchefstroom Theological Publications.
- Dimant, D., 1994. *Pesharim*. (In Collins, J. J. & Harlow, D. C., Eds. *The Eerdmans dictionary of early Judaism*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company. pp., 1050-1056).
- Duff, J., 2005. *The elements of New Testamnet Greek*. Cambridge: Cambridge University press.

- Duff, P., 2001. Social-science commentary on the book of Revelation. *The Journal of Religion*, 81 (4), pp., 631-632.
- Duvall, J. S. & Hays, J. D., 2012. Grasping God's word: a hands-on approach to reading. Interpreting and applying the Bible. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- Easley, K. H., 1998. Revelation (Vol. 12). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.
- Ewing, W., 2006. The power of the Lamb: Revelation's theology of liberation for you. Eugene: Wipf & Stock
- Faley, R. J., 1999. Apocalypse then & now: a companion to the book of Revelation. New York: Paulist Press.
- Fee, G. D., 2011. Revelation: a new commentary. Eugene: Cascade Books.
- 2002. New Testament exegesis: a handbook for students and pastors. Louisville: Westminster John Knox.
- Finamore, S., 2009. God, order and chaos: René Girard and the Apocalypse. Milton Keynes: Paternoster.
- Fiorenza, E. S., 1991. Revelation: vision of a just world. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
- Foyle, M. F., 2001. Honourably wounded: stress among Christian workers. Grand Rapids, MI: Monarch Books.
- Frankfurter, D., 2011. The Revelation of John (*In Levine, A. J. & Zvi Brettler, M., the Jewish annotated New Testament*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp., 463-498).
- Friesen, S. J., 2001. The imperial cult and the apocalypse of John: reading Revelation in ruins. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ganzevoort, R. R., 2008. Scars and stigmata: Trauma, identity, and theology. *Practical Theology*, 1 (1) pp., 19-31.
- 2012. Spirit and trauma: a theology of remaining. *Modern Believing*, 53 (4), pp., 438-440.

- Garland, A. C. 2006. A Testimony of Jesus Christ: a commentary on the book of Revelation. Galaxie Software.
- Girard, R., 1996. The Girard reader. New York: Crossroad Publishing Co.
- 1978. Things hidden since the beginning of the world. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Glasson, B., 2009. A spirituality of survival: enabling a response to trauma and abuse. London: Continuum.
- Glustrom, S., 1994. The language of Judaism. New Jersey: Jason Aronson, Inc.
- Goldsworthy, G., 1984. The gospel in Revelation: Gospel and the apocalypse. Lancer: Paternoster Press.
- 1984. The Lamb & the Lion: the gospel in Revelation. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.
- Goldingay, J., 2006. Psalms: volume 1, 1-41. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.
- Gonzalez, J. L. 1984. Story of Christianity: the early church to the dawn of reformation (vol 1). New York. NY: HarperCollins publishers.
- 1999. For the healing of the nations: The book of Revelation in an age of cultural conflict. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
- Gorman, M. J., 2011. Reading Revelation responsibly: uncivil worship and witness following the Lamb into the new creation. Eugene: Cascade Books.
- Gregg, S., 1997. Revelation: Four views a parallel commentary. Nashville, TE : Thomas Nelson, Inc.
- Hand, B., 2012. The Climax of Biblical Prophecy: A Guide to Interpreting Revelation. Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press.
- Harrower, S. D. 2018. The Problem of Evil. (*In* M. Ward, J. Parks, B. Ellis, & T. Hains (Eds.), Lexham Survey of Theology. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.)
- Hendriksen, W., 2007. More than conquerors: An interpretation of the book of Revelation. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.

- Hill, C., 2004. *The glory of the atonement: Atonement in the apocalypse of John*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- Hill, D., 1967. *Greek words and Hebrew meanings: studies in the semantics of soteriological terms*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hill, M., Hill, H., Baggé, R. & Miersma, P., 2004. *Healing the wounds of trauma: How the church can help*. Nairobi: Paulines.
- Holland, T., 2011. *Romans: the divine marriage*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick publications
- Jewett, R., 2013. *Romans*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.
- Johns, L. L., 2003. *The Lamb Christology of the Apocalypse of John: an investigation into its origins and rhetorical force*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock.
- Kayumba, P. L., 2017. *The Peace motif in Luke-Acts: its meaning and its affects*. Potchefstroom: North-West University.
- Keener, C. S., 1993. *The IVP Bible background commentary: New Testament*. Downers groves, Illinois: Intervarsity press.
- 1996. *Bible background commentary of the New Testament*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- 2000. *Revelation (In the NIV application commentary series)*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- 2012. *Acts: an exegetical commentary*. 1, 1. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.
- Kistemaker, S. J., 2007. *Revelation: New Testament commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.
- Koester, C. R., 2001. *Revelation and the end of all things*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- Kraybill, J. N., 2010. *Apocalypse and allegiance: worship, politics, and devotion in the book of Revelation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press.
- Kruse, C. G., 2012. *Paul's letter to the Romans*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

- Ladd, G. E., 1959. *The Gospel of the Kingdom: scriptural: studies in the kingdom of God*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- 1972. *A commentary of the Revelation of John*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- 1974. *The presence of the future: the eschatology of Biblical realism*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Lenski, R. C. H., 1963. *The interpretation of St. John's Revelation*. Minneapolis: Augsburg.
- Liddell, H.G. & Scott, R., 1996. *A Greek-English lexicon*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Louw, J. P., 1982. *The semantics of New Testament Greek*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.
- Louw, J. P. & Nida, E. A., 1988. *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament based on semantic domains*. New York, NY: United Bible Societies.
- Lowery, B. 2011. *The Beast and the Prostitute in Revelation 17*. (In S. J. Wood (Ed.), *Dragons, John, and Every Grain of Sand: Essays on the Book of Revelation in Honor of Dr. Robert Lowery*. College Press Publishing Co.)
- Maier, H. O., 2002. *Apocalypse recalled: the book of Revelation after Christendom*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
- Mack, W. A., 2004. *Anger and stress management: God's way*. New York: Calvary Press Publishing.
- Malina, B. J., 1995. *The New Jerusalem in the revelation of John: The city as a symbol of life with God*. Minnesota: Liturgical Press.
- Malina, B. J., & Pilch, J. J., 2000. *Social-science commentary on the book of Revelation*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
- Mangina, J. L., 2010. *Revelation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press.
- Mathewson, D., 2002. *The Destiny of the Nations in Revelation 21:1–22:5: A Reconsideration*. Tyndale Bulletin, 53, pp., 121–42.

- McDonald, P. M., 1996. Lion as slain lamb: *on reading Revelation recursively*.
Horizons, 23 (1), pp., 29-47.
- McKnight, S., 2011. The letter of James. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- McNicol, A. J. 2011. The Conversion of the Nations in Revelation. (M. Goodacre, Ed.) London; New York: T&T Clark.
- McCartney, D. G., 2009. James. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic.
- Michaels, J. R., 1997. Revelation (Vol. 20). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- Moltmann, J., 1974. The crucified God: The cross of Christ as the foundation and criticism of Christian theology. London: SCM Press.
- 1979. Hope for the Church: Moltmann in dialogue with practical theology. Nashville, TN: Abingdon.
- Moo, D. J., 1996. The epistle to the Romans. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- 2000. The letter of James. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- Moore, R.D., 2004. The kingdom of Christ: the new evangelical perspective. Illinois: Crossway.
- Moulton, J. H. & Milligan, G., 1929. The vocabulary of the Greek Testament: illustrated from the papyri and other non-literary sources. London: Hodder & Stoughton.
- Mounce, R. H., 1988. Book of Revelation. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- 1997. The book of Revelation. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- Morphew, J. D., 1991. Breakthrough: discovering the kingdom. Cape Town: Vineyard International Publishing.
- Morris, L., 1987. Revelation: an introduction and commentary. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- Murphy, F. J., 1998. Fallen is Babylon: The Revelation to John. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity.

- Müller, M., 2008. The expression "Son of Man" and the development of Christology: a history of interpretation. London: Equinox.
- Nickelsburg, G.W.E., 2010. Sons of man. (*In* Collins, J. J. & Harlow, D. C., Eds. The Eerdmans dictionary of early Judaism. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company. pp., 1249-1251).
- Newhouse, C., 2011. Church Growth Rwanda: A Haven for Healing. *Christianity Today*, 55 (12), p., 19.
- O'Connor, K. M., 2011. Jeremiah: pain and promise. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
- Osborne, G. R., 2002. Revelation: Baker exegetical commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.
- Paul, I., 2018. Revelation: Tyndale New Testament commentaries. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity.
- Paulien, J., 2003. The Lion/ Lamb King: reading the Apocalypse from popular culture. (*In* Barr, D. L. Reading the book of Revelation: a resource for students. Atlanta: Society of Biblical literature. pp., 151-161).
- Patterson, P., 2012. New American commentary volume 39: Revelation. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman publishers.
- Payne, D. F., 1982. I & II Samuel: the daily study Bible series. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press.
- Perrin, N., 1970. What is redaction criticism? London: Fortress Press.
- Phillips, V. C., 2004. Feminist Interpretation. (*In* Douglas, A. K. Method of biblical interpretation. Nashville: Abingdon Press. pp., 371-384).
- Phillips, T. E., 2013. Homer and the New Testament (*In* Green, J. B., eds. The world of the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group. pp., 390-397).
- 2013. Literary form in the New Testament (*In* Green, J. B., eds. The world of the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group. pp., 379-389).

- Phillips, R. D., 2017. Revelation: a reformed expository commentary. Phillipsburg: P & R publishing.
- Pink, A. W., 1993. The life of David. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.
- Plumer, W. S., 1975. Psalms: a critical and expository commentary with doctrinal and exegetical remarks. Edinburgh: The Banner of Trust.
- Pomykala, K. E., 2010. Messianism. (In Collins, J. J. & Harlow, D. C., Eds. The Eerdmans dictionary of early Judaism. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company. pp., 938-942).
- Powell, M. A., 1990. What is narrative criticism? A new approach to the Bible. Minneapolis: SPCK.
- Resseguie, J. L., 2009. The Revelation of John: a narrative commentary. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic.
- Rogers, Jr. C. L., Rogers III, C. L., 1998. The new linguistic and exegetical key to the Greek New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.
- Russell, D. S., 1978. Apocalyptic: ancient and modern. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.
- Ryken, P. G., 2001. Jeremiah and Lamentation: from sorrow to hope. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.
- Royalty, R. M., 2005. The Lamb Christology of the Apocalypse of John: *an investigation into its origins and rhetorical force*. Journal of biblical literature, 124 (3), pp., 571-575.
- Satre, L. J., 1984. Interpreting the book of Revelation. Word & World, 4 (1), pp., 57-69.
- Seccombe, D. P., 2002. The King of God's kingdom: as solution to the puzzle of Jesus. Carlisle: Paternoster Press.
- Seegobin, W., 1999. Posttraumatic Stress Disorder. (In D. G. Benner & P. C. Hill [Eds.], Baker encyclopedia of psychology & counselling [2nd ed.]. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books).
- Seiss, J. A., 1987. The Apocalypse: the exposition of the book of Revelation. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel publications

- Silva, M., 1983. *Biblical words and their meaning: an introduction to lexical semantics*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- Siebeck, M., 2003. The Lamb Christology of the Apocalypse of John. Sheila Klassen-Wiebe, Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, MB, pp., 107-109
- Skemp, V.T. M., 2001. Social-science commentary on the book of Revelation. *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 63 (4), pp., 757-758.
- Smalley, S. S., 2005. *The Revelation to John: a commentary on the Greek text of the apocalypse*. London: SPCK.
- Smith, J. E., 1993. *What the Bible teaches about the promised messiah*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.
- Smith, R. S. 2017. Belting out the Blues as Believers: The Importance of Singing Lament. *Themelios*, 42 (1), p., 103.
- Stevens, G. L., 2010. *Essays on Revelation: Appropriating yesterday's Apocalypse in today's world*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications.
- Steinberg, N., 2004. Social-scientific criticism. (*In Douglas, A. K. Method of biblical interpretation*. Nashville: Abingdon Press. pp., 275-279).
- Strong, J., 2009. *A Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Greek Testament and the Hebrew Bible (Vol. 1)*. Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.
- Swete, H. B., 1977. *Commentary on Revelation*. Grand Rapids: Kregel publishing.
- Sweet, J. P. M., 1979. *Revelation*. (*In Westminster Commentaries*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press.).
- 1981. *Maintaining the Testimony of Jesus: the suffering of Christians in the Revelation of John* (*In Styler, G. M., et al. Suffering and martyrdom in the New Testament*. London: Cambridge University Press. pp., 101–17)
- 1990. *Revelation*. London: SCM Press.
- Talstra, E., 1993. *Solomon's prayer: synchrony and diachrony in the composition of 1 Kings 8, 14-61 (contributions to biblical exegesis & theology)*. Eugene, OR: Kok Pharos Pub House.

- Thomas, R. L., 1995. Revelation 8-22: an exegetical commentary. Chicago. Moody press.
- Torrance, T. F., 1960. The Apocalypse today. Cambridge: James Clarke & Co Ltd
- Trafton, J. L., 2005. Reading Revelation: a literary and theological commentary. Macon: Smyth & Helwys.
- Trail, R. L., 2003. An exegetical summary of Revelation 1-11. [S.I]: SIL International.
- 2008. An Exegetical Summary of Revelation 12–22. Dallas, TX: SIL International.
- Tübingen, O. M., 1971. Σφάζω, σφαγή. (*In* Friedrich, G., and eds. Theological dictionary of the New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans. pp., 925-936).
- Wallace, D. B., 1996. Greek grammar beyond the basics: an exegetical syntax of the New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- Walton, J. H., Mathews, V.H., & Chavalas, M.W., 2000. The IVP Bible background commentary of the Old Testament. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- Walton, J. H., 2006. Ancient Near Eastern thought on the Old Testament: introducing the conceptual world of the Hebrew Bible. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.
- Witherington, B., 2003. Revelation. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wilcock, M., 1975. I saw heaven opened: The message of revelation. Leicester: InterVarsity Press.
- Wilson, W. P., 1999. Death and Dying. (*In* D. G. Benner & P. C. Hill (Eds.), Baker encyclopaedia of psychology & counselling (2nd ed.). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books).
- Winter, B. W., 2001. After Paul left Corinth: the influence of secular ethics and social change. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co.
- Wood, L. J., 1973. Commentary on Daniel. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock publishers.

Wood, S. J. 2011. Simplifying the number of the beast (Rev 13:18): an interpretation of 666 and 616. (*In* Dragons, John, and every grain of sand: essays on the book of Revelation. Shane J. Wood (Eds). Joplin, Mo.: College. pp., 181-194).

Wright, N. T., 2003. The resurrection of the son of God. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

Xeravits, G. G., 2010. Son of God (*In* Collins, J. J. & Harlow, D. C., Eds. The Eerdmans dictionary of early Judaism. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company. pp., 1248-1249).

Yee, G. A., 2004. Ideological criticism. (*In* Douglas, A. K. Method of biblical interpretation. Nashville: Abingdon Press. pp., 345-348).

——— 2007. Judges & method: New approaches in biblical studies. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.