

THE IMAGE OF THE LAMB IN THE APOCALYPSE OF JOHN

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'The Apocalypse of John' has the power both to fascinate and repel a reader in his first encounter with the book. The book welcomes the reader with the picture of the glorious and risen Lord dressed in a sparkling robe with dazzling head hair standing in the midst of seven golden lampstands. The figure is "like a son of Man" whose voice is like that of rushing waters. In rapid succession, the reader is given the picture of seven churches and their angels in Asia Minor. While the angel of a church is commended, the other is rebuked. Still one angel is encouraged, the other is admonished and the other reprimanded, as the case may be.

But the book does not stop there. The reader is presented with the picture of nature at war with itself. The stars fall, and the sun and moon refuse to shine. The reader could become frightened with the sight of "strange and terrible monsters", appearing "from the sea" or "from an abyss and" demanding "allegiance of all men on the pain of death."¹ Furthermore, symbols, numbers, colours, and pictures of Babylon and Jerusalem are all curious and familiar phenomena in the Apocalypse.² Before our reader "the atmosphere is charged with excitement, horror, rapture and mystery, but the main impression upon our imagination and mind is the bizarre, the grotesque, the fantastic."³

Little wonder then, that scholars, commentators and theologians down through the years have tenaciously held divergent opinions on the book. For Barclay it is not only a "strange book", it is equally mind-boggling to the modern reader. Just as much as it is unique, the book is all the same "notoriously difficult for the modern man to understand."⁴ Certainly Barclay is not alone in this way of thinking about the book. The attitude of the early church to the book reflects these problems. Marcion (c. A. D. 140) throws it out completely from his canon.⁵ Indeed Clement of Rome, around A. D. 93-97 failed to come to firm grips with the book, and even the whole of the New Testament, as divine while for him the Old Testament was not only scripture, it was the utterance of God in its entirety. By A. D. 200, however, Western Christianity had accepted the Apocalypse as part of its New Testament canon.

But the debate rages on. From outright rejection to acceptance, this was the situation with the book of Revelation. This resulted in the book being considered as disputed. Eusebius (c. 265-339) laments that as a result of the uncertainty of its meaning and interpretation, some church Fathers rejected it. He refers to Papias, Irenaeus, and Apollonius as those who disputed it, and treated it with caution.⁶ In exasperation the great reformer, Martin Luther, on the one hand allows each interpreter of the book to hold his own opinion, while for him on the other hand, he moans as he asserts, "I miss more than one thing in this book, and this makes me hold it to be neither apostolic nor prophetic." The author, for Luther, has gone too far by commending his work more highly than others, even when they are more superior to his own.

Luther appears to have been offended by the author when he comments further that the author was not magnanimous enough when he "threatens that if anyone takes away

anything from it, God will deal likewise with him. Again they are to be blessed who keep what is written therein; and yet no one knows what that is, to say nothing of keeping it." Luther is not through yet. He continues, "it is just the same as if we had it not, and there are many far better books for us to keep." Then Luther concludes: "My spirit cannot fit itself into this book. There is one sufficient reason, for me not to think highly of it, - Christ is not taught or known in it, but to teach Christ is the thing which an apostle is bound, above all else, to do... Therefore I stick to the books which give me Christ, clearly and purely."

This attitude to the Apocalypse persisted for several centuries, even after Luther. The contributions of the likes of F. C. Baur and his pupil David Strauss could be considered as an extension of Luther's scepticism about the book. But while Luther would allow the sleeping dog to lie undisturbed, Baur and his disciples have dragged it into more troubled waters of scholarship.⁸ Schlatter, however does not see anything strange in the Apocalypse. Rather we should see the Apocalypse as a "spirit-cause process" revealing the mind of the Christian prophets who took after the pattern of the Old Testament predecessors.⁹ He graphically describes it as "a branch of the haggada, the exegetical science prevalent at the time. The material of apocalyptic originated from its practice of interpreting, expanding, and systematizing prophecy according to certain rules. To this end the writers put themselves into the place of the ancient prophet."¹⁰

This trend of thought continued till the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Charles, writing in the 1920s, maintains that if carefully read and understood, the apocalypse should pose no scandal to any reader. In it the portrait of Jesus is comprehensive. The pictures range from Jesus as the historical Christ to that of him as the pre-existent one. Apart from presenting the doctrine of God superbly, "Jesus is his unique Son. He is the great High Priest and the Divine Christ, among other pictures discovered by Charles in the book."¹¹

For Dodd, however, the author of the Apocalypse was deeply saturated with "revived Jewish eschatology." In his attempts to align New Testament document with his "realized eschatology" programme, he thinks that Christianity was in danger of falling back into the position of the earlier apocalyptic. For some, the apocalyptists are more concerned with the future than the present. In this connection the Apocalypse of John would not fit into Dodd's thinking. He would rather allow the author to think in a different way. The author ought not to play down the importance of the present. The age to come is already here: "Minds dominated by fantastic visions of the Revelation of John might easily lose the sense that all had been made new by the coming of Christ, and that in the communion of His people the life of the Age to come was a present possession through the Spirit which He had given."¹²

With all the images and visions sprinkled all over the book, the Apocalypse according to Dodd is sub-Christian when compared with the teaching of Jesus. The work falls below the level of the best apocalyptic portions of the Old Testament in its teachings about God. He argues further: "the God of the Apocalypse can hardly be recognized as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, nor has the fierce Messiah, whose warriors ride in blood up to their horses' bridles, many traits that would recall Him of whom the primitive kerygma proclaimed that He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, because God was with Him."¹³

Bultmann, the acclaimed "greatest New Testament Scholar of the twentieth

century,"¹⁵ shares a similar opinion with Dodd. Bultmann is of the viewpoint that "Christianity of the Revelation has to be termed a weakly christianized Judaism." He maintains that the author of the Apocalypse plays down the importance of Christ and highly elevates "that passionate eschatological hope... which the Jewish apocalyptists lack." He argues further that the attributes of God such as the heavenly comforter and ruler have all been transferred to Jesus. His emphasis is heavily futuristic at the expense of the present. This is where he aligns with Dodd. He then concludes: "But the peculiar 'between-ness' of Christian existence has not been grasped. In fact, not even in the chronological sense does the present possess the character of an interval, because the author does not reflect about the past which in Christ has been brought to its end out of which believers have been translated into a new beginning. Hence the present is understood in a way not basically different from the understanding of it in the Jewish apocalypse: namely, as a time of temporariness, of waiting. The symptom of this understanding is the fact that pistils is essentially conceived as 'endurance', as in Judaism."¹⁶

Thus the spate of objections to the book continues unabated. But the question remains largely unanswered in terms of its meaning and understanding, even for twenty-first century Christianity. With a lot of modern critical tools in our hands to interpret the book, its approach still agitates our minds as Osborne rightly observes: "the unreality of the symbols and the constant shifting from one mysterious scene to another is greatly confusing. At the same time, the text portrays the war in heaven and on earth, between good and evil, between the children of God and the forces of Satan. The reader is caught between the literal and the symbolic, not knowing quite how to approach these works. Once we know how to handle the locusts and demonic hordes, the many-horned goats and fearsome beasts, the apocalyptic is a fascinating and pervasive vehicle for presentation of theological truth."¹⁷

Now the question arises afresh: What do we make of this book, particularly in the face of these contending schools of interpretation? The question may be posed differently as follows: while the forces of evil and good continue to contest for supremacy in heaven and on earth as painted in the Apocalypse of John, and the Western church continues in its quest to find meaning of the book for the present age¹⁸, what does it all mean to those outside¹⁹ of the West, and particularly the African Christians? We would like to devote the rest of this article to these questions. Our approach, however, is that of extrapolating the passages that deal with the Lamb, in the hope that at the end of the exercise the package will yield something meaningful to us as part of the global church in Africa, and how the Lamb will be able to speak to our needs and concerns directly.²⁰

1. The Lamb and the Horns

So then we may recall that Christology has been the bone of contention on whether or not to accept the Apocalypse by the early church and the subsequent generations up to the Reformation and even the twentieth century. But we have equally seen that hardly can the view that the Book is sub-standard in its Christological presentations be sustained. While God the Father frequently charges back and forth in the book as also characteristic of the Jewish apocalyptic, the Apocalypse of John is unique in its portrayal of God the Son. Charles was at once at home with the scholars who held tenaciously to the view that the Apocalypse was Jewish, but after several years of special

study of the book,²¹ he argued correctly that to place heavy emphasis on the Jewish character of the doctrine of God at the expense of its Christological nature "betrays a total misapprehension or the question at issue." He maintained that a balance must be struck, "for all that the son has and is, is derived from the father."²²

Granted therefore that the Apocalypse is not lacking in Christology, such Christology however must be seen in the unconventional way that the author writes. He has freely and successfully wrapped his teaching about the Christ in visions, dreams, poetic language and imageries. As an Apocalyptic per excellence his profuse use of images must not be construed as carelessness, rather, "it is kept fluid and shifting so that there will be no mistaking of symbol for literal description."²³ This leads us accordingly to a closer investigation of the concerned passages through which the image of the Lamb, a favourite Christological figure indeed of the Apocalyptist, is presented.²⁴

Even though our first encounter with the figure is in chapter five, this cannot be understood in isolation from the previous chapter. While chapter four records the magnificent vision of the glorious God the creator, chapter five presents the picture of the Lamb the Redeemer of the condemned creation. The end of chapter four presents the heavenly choral group in deep worship of God the Father, and chapter five also ends with the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders bursting into a new song to the adoration of the Lamb.²⁵ Thus our author cares as much for what happens in heaven just as he does for the earth. From the scene of earth in chapters two to three he moves to heaven from the twin chapters of four and five and remains there until chapter ten. Thereafter he moves back and forth alternately until the end of the book.²⁶ Kiddle sums up beautifully how the two chapters relate: "The two chapters are, in short, altogether complementary. Their essential interest lies in three songs, one to the Creator (iv. ii), another to the Redeemer (v. 9) and the third to the Father and Son, who together reign supreme (v. 13). The rest of John's description of the heavenly scene emphasizes and expands the story told in those three songs."²⁷

The vision at hand in chapter five depicts the picture of the one who sits on the throne as in chapter four. But in this vision the one on the throne is in possession of a book²⁸ that was full of writing inside out and was sealed with seven seals.²⁹ Neither on earth, beneath the earth, nor in heaven was found any creature strong enough (*edunato* from *dunamai* or *dunamis*, denoting power, strength or authority) to unfasten the seals nor open the book. Prior to this weakness and absolute helplessness on the part of all creation, there was a deafening cry of challenge as that of "a lion roaring" from a mighty angel.³⁰ Out of sheer frustration and his own unworthiness also to help in the situation the seer burst into profuse and unrestrained weeping before one elder assuaged his intense sorrow by announcing the presence of one who is more than able to break the seals, open the book, and subsequently execute the contents therein.

By reason of his conquest, the Apocalyptist finds an answer to his predicament in the elder's announcement that the Christ, who is now the Lion of the tribe of Judah and the Lamb, is he who is worthy out of all creation. But why the image of the Lion at this point, particularly that which is from the tribe of Judah, and the root of David? Charles is of the opinion that the image is borrowed from Gen. 49:9 where Judah receives the appellation of lion from Jacob as a symbol of spiritual leadership to all other tribes.³¹ But while Judah is likened to a lion's cub and a lioness that no one would dare to arouse, the picture at hand appears only here in the entire Bible. Of all other places where lion is used for Israel as a concept Morris claims that it is only in 2 Esdras 12:31-32 that the lion

is used as a symbol of the Messiah.²⁷ The impact of this Lion in our context however, is better expressed by Barclay: "The strength and the power of the lion, his undoubted place as the king of beasts, make him a fitting emblem of the all-powerful Messiah, whom the Jews awaited."²⁸

"The Root of David" is another title ascribed to this figure who is able to open the book. We should note however that this symbol is again most peculiar to our author. While Swete²⁹ and Johnson³⁰ consider Old Testament passages such as Isa. 11:1, 10 and Jer. 23:5 as possible sources of inspiration and information for our author, none of the passages describes him as our author has done. In those passages he is either the root of Jesse or simply a Branch. For this reason our author should be credited as the only one who employs the Lion of Judah as a Christological title in the whole Bible. Similarly this is what he has done with the Root of David. In essence what he means is that the object of his vision springs from David rather than any other person in the lineage of his ancestors. That the Lion has been victorious, and is from the clan of David confers on him the legitimacy both to unbind the book's seals and open it to peruse and execute its contents.³¹

Ironically, at this point as our author turned around and took a good and closer look at the Lion, it was a Lamb that he saw. With all its enormous power and strength to deliver, paradoxically it was the figure of the Lamb (*arnion*), a young sheep, with all meekness, that the Apocalyptist saw in the centre of the heavenly court. It is important to note here that "the contrast of the Lamb with the Lion is sufficiently striking in any case, directing attention to the unique combination of majesty and meekness which characterized the life of Jesus Christ."³² It is also worthy of note that this Lamb is unique just as the Lion is, and very peculiar to the Apocalypse. This image of the Lamb is predominantly used from now until the end of the book. Charles notes that "the word is used twenty-nine times in twelve chapters of the Apocalypse as a designation of the crucified Messiah."³³

An image with a difference, the Lamb's physical features include seven horns and seven eyes indicating, according to the author, the seven spirits of God. Apparently, the Lamb which has been depicted "as if it had been slain" remains "standing in readiness for action."³⁴ If anyone among the first recipients of the Apocalypse was still in doubt, by now he should come to terms with the fact that our author means more than what he has put down. The Lamb with horns, not one but seven, is unusual. But when we recollect that the first picture of that of Lion signifies power and strength, then the horns in this regard must be understood not in the realms of mere ideas and plastic conceptions. The Lamb with horns is mainly symbolical and metaphorical.

The consensus of opinion among scholars regarding this strange figure is that with the horns and the eyes there is a paradox, and this is well expressed by Barclay: "the Lamb bears the sacrificial wounds upon it, but at the same time it is clothed with the very might of God which can now shatter and break its enemies. The Lamb has seven horns; we have seen that number seven stands for completeness and perfection; the power of the Lamb is perfect, full, complete beyond withstanding."³⁵ But what of the eyes that are not only seven in number as well, but which have been entrusted with a mission, as it were, for the whole earth? Barclay goes ahead to explain again: "It is a strange and an eerie picture; but quite clearly it stands for the all-seeing omniscience of God. In an almost crude way it says that there is no place on earth which is not under the eye of God, and which God does not see."³⁶

Morris' understanding appears to be more appealing and interesting. For him, "What John appears to be telling us in his different symbols is that Christ, of the tribe of Judah and the line of David, is supremely powerful and all-knowing, and that he has won his victory by his atoning and sacrificial death."⁴² Thus fully equipped for action, the Lion-Lamb figure as the only one in heaven and on earth capable to do so, moved forward and took the book from the hand of the one seated on the throne. For Kiddle, this is "a thought impossible to visualize, but magnificent as a symbol of the death of Christ and its results. In his own way, John is expressing the perfect harmony between the will of God and the will of Christ."⁴³ Little wonder then that all segments of the heavenly court with choral and liturgical vessels in their hands burst into great praise and adoration both to the one seated on the throne and the Lamb.

Similarly, in his unique way the Apocalyptist has been able to paint a great picture of the crucified one to his immediate audience in a perfect way in an age when the church was in terrible conflict with a system that was against God and Christ, coupled with political oppression. Though he has not opened the book before the splendid adoration was offered to him, the worship is a catalyst that leads to other actions which follow in rapid succession. On the whole, "John is above all an interpreter of Jesus. In many ways his understanding of Christ is advanced. . . The warrior Lion / Lamb is also the crucified Jesus. He is slain and his blood is a ransom for humanity; and thereby he is able to make all believers a kingdom, and priests to our God."⁴⁴ Such is the window that opens the flood-gate of our understanding of the image of the Lamb in other parts of the Apocalypse.

II. The Lamb and His Victory

It is not enough for the Lamb to be sufficiently identified as the crucified and risen Lord who receives the book and subsequent divine adoration. It is also apposite here to inquire regarding what has been done with it after the elaborate and glamorous worship. It is now certain that the Lamb is more than ready to act upon the book, and first the seals must be unfastened. In chapter 6, we are intimated with the opening of the seals. Not less than six times in the chapter (vv. 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 12) does the Lamb feature. As each seal is opened a grim picture is presented. We are introduced to a series of catastrophies unleashed upon the earth. The scene of the heavenly court which attracted supreme worship is to introduce the equipped warrior for his actions.

The content of the book is still wrapped in mystery and remains firmly in the hands of the Lamb. Johnson is of the view that the book (scroll) "itself involves the rest of the Revelation, and has to do with the consummation of the mystery of all things, the goal or end of history for both the overcomers and the beast worshippers."⁴⁵ Apart from the white horse, perhaps a symbol of victory, which the first opened seal presents with the rider and his crown of royalty on him,⁴⁶ the next three seals which produce a fiery red horse, black horse and a pale horse respectively are grim pictures of war, bloody conquest, famine and pestilence released upon the earth. However, hope is not lost as something new is introduced.

The loosening of the fifth seal shifts action from the earth to heaven again, where under the altar the souls of faithful martyrs are kept safe. While the first four seals present a picture of troubled and unsettled times, the fifth supplies an interlude in which the redeemed are assured that their death is not in vain as judgment is sure, and their victory with the riding victor on the white horse remains a source of unfettered joy in

their present state of blessedness.

The breaking of the next seal, which is the sixth, depicts another panorama of terror that renders the earth darkened. In rapid succession the seer is allowed to visualize invasion of the earth with civil war, famine of unprecedented magnitude, and even death. But then there is another interlude between the sixth and seventh seals. This is very important as it presents the position of the faithful ones in the midst of the terrors. A quick look at the first interlude shows how the faithful martyrs are secured from the terrors that bedevil a godless world. In the interlude at hand the Apocalyptist presents a people of God, uncountable in number, a myriad indeed from all nations of the earth, who have triumphed and come out unscathed at the close of the great distress.

As it is the case with the faithful martyrs these ones also are arrayed in splendor and are ascribing their salvation to the grace of God and the Lamb. Even in this case Kiddle pleads that the Apocalyptist must not be misunderstood. "The new thought," he asserts, "is the message about the church's fate when these woes were to fall upon the world. That is the secret which the reader must eagerly ponder. It is not on the grim horsemen of the first four seals that his eyes must be fixed, not yet on the cosmic disorder sketched in vv. 12-17; he must rather look to a passage which is often referred to as 'an interlude' in the sequence of the seven seal portents, but is much too important to be thus designated as though it were of minor significance, in as much as it gives meaning to the vision as a whole."¹⁷ In other words in a world that is full of implacable, causeless and sadistic foes against anything and everything that is godly, the way of escape for the faithful is Lion-Lamb who himself has gone through a similar experience of life like them but who by reason of him being slain has triumphed over the foes. Thus he is more than qualified to save to the uttermost. But how does this relate to us?

III. Observation and Remarks

We should recollect at this point that the task we set for ourselves is how our finding will benefit the current church in Africa. The picture that has emerged so far about the Lamb is that of a conquering warrior dealing death blows on his enemies and saving his followers in the midst of deadly plagues that are intermittently unleashed on a world that is relentlessly evil and spoiling every opportunity for the truth to triumph. Although in this type of exercise it is not possible to cover all the ground, it is pertinent to say that a picture has been painted sufficient enough to know the mind of the Apocalyptist.

However, one crucial question remains to tackle, albeit briefly, before we draw a conclusion. The book in the hands of the Lamb remains closed and the contents yet undisclosed. As they are wont to do, several scholars have dissipated much energy on unraveling what the contents should be. While the academic knocks continue to hit hard on the issue, Morris' idea is quite instructive at this point. Of the book he says, "It was as full as it could possibly be. Some have identified the book with the Old Testament, others with Revelation, itself. This approach is perverse. The book surely is that which contains the world's destiny and its contents are revealed to us pictorially as the seals are broken."¹⁸ This may not be the last word on the book.

But while the search continues the next issue that prompted this exercise has to be addressed. What do we make of the Lamb in a land that has constantly experienced political upheavals, social dislocations, civil wars and religious upheavals? Not long ago Obafemi Awolowo, one of the leading Christian politicians in Africa, challenged

the church to look inward for a self-examination and how to relate to the state and address the issues that affected her adversely. To him the clergy have the responsibility to do this. While still in College he had the following to say about the church: "I on my part made no attempt to interfere with the religious views and practices of my friends or of the staff and students in the College. But if anyone tried to preach Church-going and the teachings of the Bible to me, as was occasionally the case, I very quickly worsted him. It is my candid view then and now that the vast majority of Christians, including the clergy, are too ill-equipped dialectically to combat with success the aggressive detractors and traducers of our great religion."¹

The answer to this is not far-fetched. It lies in the hands of our trainers who would not want to see anything challenge the doctrines they had pumped into our heads. Anything done here to allow the Lamb to triumph and deliver the faithful within our own cultural setting is thundered against and viewed as syncretism. This is well expressed by one of them: "In their efforts to contextualize their Christian faith, the churches of Africa are faced with the problem of the relation of its expression of its Christian faith to traditional culture and religion. Often there is the temptation in some sense or the other to accommodate the Christian faith to certain aspects of traditional religion. The result is often a form of religious syncretism."²

But he is not through yet. "The position of the writer of the book of Revelation concerning such tendencies is clear. All such forms of syncretism are completely out of place in the Christian church. The central characteristic of the Christian faith is the absolute lordship of the risen Christ. Absolutely anything which compromises that Lordship in any way must be utterly rejected."³ In as much as this sort of attitude persists in Africa with our trainers from the West, the church will remain politically ignorant, culturally irrelevant, socially inept and religiously dead. Moreover the Lamb will be devoid of its lion's absolute power to save and the Lamb's humility and meekness to associate with the oppressed, down-trodden and out cast in Africa, will be found wanting.⁴

End Notes

¹ R.P.C. Hanson, "The significance of the Doctrine of the Last Things for Christian Belief," Bulleting of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester 62 No. 1 (Autumn 1979), p. 115.

² Cf. Leon Morris, Apocalyptic (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eardmans Publishing Co., 1974), pp. 37-50.

³ Hanson, "Significance of Doctrine," p. 115.

⁴ William Barclay, The Revelation of John, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: the Saint Andrew Press, 1970), 1:1.

⁵ For the influence that Marcion wielded in the early Church and his general attitude to the Old Testament and the New, see Williston Walker, A History of the Christian Church (New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1959), pp. 54-55; E. Ferguson, "Marcion (C. 80 - C. 160)" in New Dictionary of Theology, edited by Sinclair B. Ferguson and David F. Wright (Leicester, England and Downers Grove Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), pp. 411-412.

⁶ See Eusebius: The History of the Church from Christ to Constantine, translated by G. A. Williamson (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1975), pp. 139, 150, 211, 225 and 254.

⁷ Henry Eyster Jacobs, Trans. Works of Martin Luther with Introduction and Notes: The Philadelphia Edition, 6 vols. (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1932), 6: 489. The Muratorian Canon, Cheltenham List, Sinaitic manuscript of the Greek New Testament, The List of Athanasius, among other witnesses show that about A. D. 200 the Apocalyptic of John had gained an indisputable entry into our New Testament Canon. For more discussions on this, see F. F. Bruce, The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable? (Downers Grove, Intervarsity Press, 1943), pp. 21-28 (1974 reprint); Henry Barclay Swete, The Apocalypse of John: The Greek Text with Introduction Notes and Indices (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 1951), pp. ixvi-ixxviii (first published in 1906); W. Marxsen, Introduction to the New Testament: An Approach to its Problems, translated by G. Buswell (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), pp. 279-284; Donald Guthrie, New Testament Introduction (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1978), pp. 931-949; and M. F. Akangbe, "Master-Slave Relations and Christian Brotherhood: A Pauline Study with Special Reference to the Epistle to Philemon" (M. A. Thesis, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1981), pp. 125-130.

⁸ For a thorough review of what Baur and Strauss stood for in terms of New Testament scholarship generally, see: Horton Harris, The Tübingen School (Oxford: Clarendon Press, Oxford University Press, 1975), particularly pp. 11-54, 181-248.

⁹ Adolf Schlatter, The theology of the Apostles: the Development of New Testament Theology, Trans. By Andreas J. Kostenberger (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), p. 111.

¹⁰ Adolf Schlatter, The History of the Christ: The Foundation of New Testament Theology, trans by Andreas J. Kostenberger (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1997), P. 232.

¹¹ R. H. Charles, The Revelation of St. John: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary, 2 Vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark 1971; latest impression of the 1920 edition), I. pp. ix cx.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. cx cxiv.

¹³ C. H. Dodd, The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980), p. 40.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 41. For more recent developments on this, see G. R. Beasley Murray, "How Christian is the Book of Revelation?" in Reconciliation and Hope: New Testament Essays in Atonement and Eschatology Presented to L. L. Morris on his 60th Birthday, edited by Robert Banks (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1974), pp. 275-284; Richard Bauckham, The Theology of the Book of Revelation: New Testament Theology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 1-22 and John M. Court, Revelation: New Testament Guides (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994), pp. 7-93.

¹⁵ Norman Perrin, The Promise of Bultmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979) p. 5.

¹⁶ Rudolf Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, 2 vols, trans. By Kendrick Grobel (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951 & 1955), 11:175.

¹⁷ Grant R. Osborne, The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press, 1991), p. 221.

¹⁸ For a good summary of theological developments in the West during the 20th century, see: Stanley J. Grenz & Roger E. Olson, eds. 20th Century Theology: God and the World in a Transitional Age (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press, 1992).

¹⁸ Even the West with all its technological advancement is still caught in this quest for the meaning of the Apocalypse in the 20th century. See Rudolf W. Raber's expository article "Revelation 21:1-8" *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* (July 1986), p. 298. Raber's quest for meaning of the book in the 21st century is very pertinent. He asks: "Who are we, and what is our role in this cosmic struggle, the outcome of which seems so assured in the visions of the seer, but which finds us still locked in time slots of some very perplexing and dangerous history? It is all well and good for the angels to be triumphant and the martyrs vindicated. But what about us, the church on earth, whose members are the beleaguered quick rather than the blessed dead?"

¹⁹ I speak of "directly" here to allay the fears of the theologians from the West who are apt to see "syncretism" in any and everything that emanates from Africa. Even Grant R. Osborne is aware of this when he discusses contextualization in his book just cited above. But he rightly warns: "Of course, this does not mean that Western churches have the right to force their 'forms' on Third World churches. African Christians should create an indigenous theology that re-expresses the normative biblical content in dogmatic symbols that communicate biblical truths to their own culture." (Osborne, *Hermeneutical Spiral*, p. 323).

²⁰ Cf. Beasley-Murray, "How Christian is the Book of Revelation?" *Reconciliation and Hope*, p. 276. Actually, Beasley-Murray affirms that Charles had put in twenty-five years of critical study of the book before the turning point in his life.

²¹ Charles, *The Revelation of John*, Vol. 1, pp. cix-cx.

²² Raber, "Revelation 21:1-8", p. 296.

²³ J. Jeremias, "amnos, aren, arnion", in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. by Gerhard Kittel and trans. By Geoffrey Bromiley 10 vols (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1972), 1:341, counts some 28 times that the word Lamb is used in the Revelation, while Barclay, *The Revelation of John*, 1:215 locates 29 times and Martin Rist and Lynn Harold Hough, "The Revelation of St. John the Divine," in *the Interpreter's Bible*, ed. by George Arthur Butrick, et. al. 12 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 12:407 also ascertained twenty-nine times. But I have been able to detect 23 times on my own, however.

²⁴ Cf. Leon Morris, *The Book of Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary* Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Leicester & Grand Rapids: Inter-Varsity Press; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 1988), p. 91.

²⁵ Cf. G. R. Beasley-Murray, "The Revelation," in *The New Bible Commentary*, ed. F. Davidson (London: The Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 1953), p. 1176. Murray adds here: "It is noticeable that, whereas the description of the throne of God in chapter iv contains no reference to Christ, in the following chapter He dominates the picture as the slain Lamb of God."

²⁶ Martin Kiddle, *The Revelation of St. John: The Moffat New Testament Commentary*, 17 vols. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1952), 17:67.

²⁷ On whether *biblion* popularly translated here as a book of parchment or vellum or as one made out of papyrus is not clear. If it is a book of parchment, then the entire vision will be in line with those scholars who argue that the Apocalypse is more of the "revived" Judaism and the like and scroll will be a right translation as the Old Testament was made up of scrolls. But if *biblion* be translated as book, it will be in line with those who argue that the Apocalypse is distinctly Christian since it would have been produced from papyrus very common at the time of writing our Apocalypse. For a thorough

discussion on how ancient books were produced, see Bruce M. Metzger, The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration (New York: Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 1-8, especially, Notes 1 & 2 of p. 5.

²⁷ Theodore Zahn, Introduction to the New Testament, 3 vols. Transl. by John Moore Trout, et. al. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1909), 3:393-395, brilliantly discusses the import of a book sealed to the people of John's day. To him it amounts to "testament" or the equivalent of our "will" which does not become effective until the demise of the testator when the book will then be unsealed, read aloud in the presence of the witnesses of the testament and then executed. But this is hardly acceptable today. For current views on this, see Alan Johnson, "Revelation", in The Expositor's Bible Commentary, 12 vols, edit. by Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 3:466-467.

²⁸ Cf. Robert H. Mounce, The Book of Revelation: The New International Commentary on the New Testament, 16 vols, edit. by Ned. B. Stonehouse, et. al. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977), 16:143. Mounce wonders even if this angel is not Gabriel (p. 143).

²⁹ Charles, The Revelation of St. John, 1:140.

³⁰ Morris, The Book of Revelation, pp. 93-94.

³¹ Barclay, The Revelation of John, 1:214.

³² Swete, The Apocalypse of John, p. 77.

³³ Johnson, Revelation, pp. 467-468.

³⁴ For further information on lion as used in scriptures both literally and metaphorically see: Walter Baur, William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (Chicago: the University of Chicago Press, 1957), pp. 473-474 under "leon, leontos"; W. Michaelis, "leon" in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, 4: 251-253; and James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament Illustrated from the Papyri and other Non-Literary Sources (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1982), p. 374. Moulton and Milligan cite a saying from a papyrus as follows: "a lion he was who took it, and a fool who lost it," in reference to a lost garment.

³⁵ Swete, The Apocalypse of St. John, p. 78.

³⁶ Charles, The Revelation of St. John, 2:141.

³⁷ Mounce, The Book of Revelation, p. 144.

³⁸ Barclay, The Revelation of John, 1:217.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Morris, The Book of Revelation, p. 95.

⁴¹ Kiddle, The Revelation of St. John, p. 102.

⁴² Stephen S. Smalley, Thunder and Love: John's Revelation and John's Community. (Milton Keynes, Eng.: Nelson Word Ltd. 1980), p. 152. There are several scholars who have a penchant to trace almost every picture or symbol used in the Apocalypse to the Old Testament or other apocalyptic books of early Judaism. In this regard they have struggled to link the Lamb at hand to either the Passover lamb (Exd. 12:568) or the picture painted of the suffering servant of Isa. 42-53. Klaus Koch, The Rediscovery of Apocalyptic. A Polemical Work on a Neglected Area of Biblical Studies and Its Damaging Effects on Theology and Philosophy: Studies in Biblical Theology 2"

Series No. 22 (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1972), pp. 57-97, has put up a brilliant discussion on the subject here. Incidentally, scholars who are bent along this line of thinking did not see any lamb motif in the Abraham-Isaac story where Abraham had to answer the lad's question on where the animal would come for the offering to which Abraham responded "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering", (Gen. 22:8). Eventually, God provided a ram in place of the lamb.

⁴³ Johnson, "Revelation," p. 472.

⁴⁴ For discussions on the identity of the white horse, see Mounce, The Book of Revelation, pp. 153-154 and John M. Court, Revelation: New Testament Guides (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994), p. 39.

⁴⁵ Kiddle, The Revelation of St. John, pp. 107-108.

⁴⁶ Morris, The Book of Revelation, p. 92

⁴⁷ Obafemi Awolowo, Awo: The Autobiography of Chief Obafemi Awolowo (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1987), p. 79. In a similar way Kenneth D. Kaunda, Zambia Shall Be Free: An Autobiography: African Writers Series (London: Heinemann Books, 1980), p. 146, expresses himself as follows: "I had begun to question certain things in the life of the mission which seemed incompatible with the teaching of Christ in the Bible. I could not see why the European missionaries should have special seats in the church and why Rev. Paul Mushindo went about on foot or on a cycle while the missionaries rode in cars." Has that kind of attitude changed towards the ones whose faces they don't want to see, just because you question their authority and a few things that are incompatible with the nature of the Lamb, and which they are doing?

⁴⁸ Robert S. Burney, The Book of Revelation (Ibadan: Daystar Press, 1988), pp. 111-112. But contra see: E. Bolaji Idowu, Towards An Indigenous Church (Ibadan: Oxford University Press, 1965), and "Religions on Peace", Orita: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies 5 No. 2 (December 1971), pp. 83-92.

⁴⁹ On how the Book of Revelation addresses the Political issues of its time, see Richard Bauckham, The Theology of the Book of Revelation: New Testament Theology (Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 35-39.