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Rev. Igboakwa Iorjiah

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THE REDEEMER LAMB OF GOD AND HIS CHURCH'S RESPONSE TO PERSECUTION

Igbakua Iorjaah, Ph.D

Abstract

The book of Revelation characterises Jesus the Messiah as a victorious warrior Lamb, who redeemed God's creation from the usurper through his self-sacrificial combat and proceeded to destroy the destroyers of the earth, as its central imagery of the Messiah. This symbolic imagery poses an interpretive challenge leading to myriads of meanings given the redemptive act of the Lamb which, however, blur the message Revelation has for dominated peoples like the Church in Nigeria. This study set out to establish the communicative intent of Revelation's symbolic imagery of the Lion-Lamb's war to redeem his countercultural community from the usurper. It combines culture-linguistic hermeneutic with empire and post-colonial examination of power relations and discourse as methodology. Contrary to the widespread view that John's Lion-Lamb imagery models Jesus' atoning self-sacrifice as Christian response to assault, it established that John paints a picture of a great warrior who engages in a two-phase warfare: a self-sacrificial atonement as spiritual war preparing his subjects for the second extended physical combat with earthly rulers—terrestrial agents of evil spiritual forces in the heavenly realms, destroying the earth. A comparison of the study cases with similar patterns in contemporary Nigeria revealed trajectories linking power, hegemony, subordination, and resistance as the underlying and undergirding force of Nigeria's current insecurity.

Introduction

There is a huge confusion among Biblical commentators about the meaning of John's symbolic imagery of a lion-lamb redeeming the world in Revelation 5. This confusion has produced interpretations of the imagery that are quite alien to the kind of situation and community John belongs to and seeks to portray. John's community—the Jewish prophetic party in first century AD Asia, better known today as Christians—was a dominated group with deviant tendencies under attack to eliminate it. ... The community was being persecuted from two fronts: by non-Christian Jews and by the clients of the imperial power in Asia (Pate 13; Thomas Rev 1-7 160; Bauckham 180). This turns out to be a depiction of power tussle that was apparently multidimensional. Among others, the non-Christian Jewish dimension featured issues with Christian Jews in Asia who had denied Christians' membership of Judaism for their belief in Jesus as the Jewish Messiah and its moral concerns (Rev 2:9, 14, 20-21; 3:9; 9:21); the imperial power dimension was concerned with political and economic challenges to the Asian Christian community (Rev 13-14; 17:2; 18:3, 9; 19:2). John rose up to defend his community against these forces. But as a leader of a dominated group, he employed infrapolitics, that is, a politics of disguise.

The persecutors of John's community called themselves kings. In contrast, John presents the Lamb as the only worthy king, having been slain as a self-sacrificing leader but came back to life and has taken over the world's government from those agents of Satan and is going to revenge like a lion. The imagery of the lamb is a disguise ploy of John's theology of political and cultural

power, dealing with crisis and despair among the dominated. The imagery of the lion was common designation of power holders in ancient times. So John desires to conceal his Messianic claims of power in the imagery of a sacrificial animal which his majorly Jewish Christian community knew to symbolise dogged leadership. Herein lays the problem of this study. Many interpreters have missed the point John is making for methodological reasons. Revelation is a political tract; so, in line with its political theology, we should understand John's symbolic imagery of the Lion-Lamb in light of his infrapolitics which depict a warrior Lamb Prince scheming to control the World Empire, not by spiritualising the scene as atonement for sin.

To adequately grasp the position presented above one needs John's linguistic and cultural background to his imagery of "lion-lamb." Thus, we first, explored the Old Testament (OT) and Jewish literature of the Second Temple; moved on to theologically analyse and then make an exposition of John's language in Revelation's narrative. The result of the exercise was used to examine the response of the Church to persecution, focusing on Nigerian, and conclusion drawn based on the findings.

Lion-Lamb Imagery in the Old Testament and Second Temple Literature

John uses three images from the Hebrew Bible to construct his imagery of Jesus the Messiah as the world's redeemer in Revelation 5:5-6: "Lion of the tribe of Judah," "the Root of David," and "Lamb." The title, "Lion of the Tribe of Judah" is from Gen. 49:8-11. Judah, his fourth son, was promised rule over the house of Jacob as well as his enemies with the might, courage, and ferocity similar to that of a lion (Gen 49:9-10). The simile describes the action or character of the matured lion, but Judah himself is portrayed metaphorically as a cub of the lion (Gen. 49:9). This suggests that the prophecy was to be fulfilled in more than one stage. The staff and sceptre of the ruler were to be kept in Judah's custody (Gen. 29:10) until a substantive ruler, was born in his line to be properly called "the Lion" (Rev.5: 5). This scripture became a commonplace application to the messianic figure in Israelite prophecy, with each author developing the concept in their own way (cf. Jer 23:5-6). This produced the mosaic of Jewish eschatological expectations in their OT and Second Temple literature (e.g., Num 24:17; Isa 11:1; Ezek 19:11, 14; Dan 7:13-28; Zech 3:8; TJud 24:1-6; TLev 18:3). Zionist Jews, like the authors of the *Testament of Judah*, *4 Ezra*, and *Romans* (15:12) thus interpreted this passage politically (Michaelis 252; Reddish 109). This is probably the source of John's usage of the lion concept in Revelation. In his view, this Messiah is the culmination of the courage, might, and ferocity of Israel (Dan 7:13-28) in its present global ecclesia.

The lamb was a very important animal to the Old Testament (OT) community, the Hebrews, especially in their religious culture. The word כֶּבֶשׂ *Kebeś*, "lamb," occurs in the OT 106 times and 100 of these occurrences refer to cultic sacrifices while the remaining six refer to other contexts (Harris, Archer, and Waltke "כֶּבֶשׂ *Kebeś*"). This attests that the lamb was most important as a sacrificial animal for the Old Testament community. Two important features of this sacrificial practice are noteworthy: propitiation of God through expiation for

the sin of the offender and substitution—transferring the evil and also death of the worshipper to an animal. Isaiah 53:1–12 where the Suffering Servant bears the iniquity and punishment of others and even Leviticus 16 reflects this substitutionary concept. This also probably underlays its New Testament usage, especially in Johannine theology. Indeed, throughout the Fertile Crescent, or Brabian Crescent the wider Semitic context of the Old Testament, domestic animals were often sacrificed in cultic activities for varying purposes in different settings (Balberg 28) with the feature of ritual substitution as in the Old Testament.

In The Second Temple Jewish literature too, lamb is a sacrificial animal, used in propitiating God (Sib Or 3:625). But during this period it is also used metaphorically to depict political contests as in the animetaphorism of 1 Enoch and the *Testament of Joseph* 19:8. The Lamb often features in those fables as a victorious warrior, saving his people from the tyranny of other metaphoric animals, sometimes with a lion beside him (1 En 89–90). This combined imagery may thus underlie John's lion-lamb imagery.

The "Lion-Lamb" Imagery in the Writings of John

John paints a number of portraits of Jesus Messiah using the imagery of the lamb. The two most prominent of them portray the Messiah in his Gospel where John depicts Jesus Messiah as a sacrificial "Lamb of God" who bore the sin of the world (Jn 1:29, 36) and in Revelation 5:6–6 where he presents him as a warrior lamb. How these portraits relate to one another to give a holistic picture is not easy to tell. Apparent trajectories point to an apostolic theological tradition which saw Jesus Messiah as a self-sacrificing world redeemer and judge of all creation. Paul calls Jesus the Passover [Lamb] (1 Cor 5:7) while Peter identifies Jesus' redeeming blood with that of an unblemished and spotless sacrificial lamb (1 Pet 1:19). Jesus the Messiah perfectly fulfilled all this according to the author of Hebrews (Heb 9:14).

One view suggests "The Suffering Servant" imagery (Isa 53) which also uses ἀμνός, (*amnos*) as John's ἀμνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, *ho amnos tou theou* "the Lamb of God" imagery. After much argument (117, 176–77) Daniel Stokl Ben Ezra for instance concludes: "In sum, Isaiah 53 explains best the Johannine tradition" (178). D. Brent Sandy, however, argues against this position (449–50). The second view links John's "Lamb of God" to the lambs used in 75 texts (LXX) for the daily atonement sacrifices in the temple (Lev 1:4; Exo 29:38–46), but is not very popular. A third, albeit doubtfully (Bass "Lamb of God"), links John's "Lamb of God" with the "lamb" Abraham substituted for Isaac (Gen 22:13). This is seen as a shadow of Christ in the New Testament (Matt 3:17; Rom 8:32). The fourth view is that John derives the term "Lamb of God" from the Passover lamb (Exo 12). John cites Exodus 12:46 (cf. Num 9:12; Ps 34:20) which forbade the breaking of any bone of the Passover lamb to explain why the legs of Jesus Messiah were not broken at his death (Jn 19:36). In addition, Robert M. Price dates Jesus' crucifixion on the day Passover lambs were slain (John 18:28; 19:14, 31), not on the following day as in the Synoptics (302; cf. Mk 14:12; Mat 26:17; Lk 22:7).

Whereas Price, pessimistically says, "the subject of John's preaching" is unknown (302), Bass dares to say "the Passover sacrifice" is an unlikely source of John's theology of Lamb of God because it "was not oriented towards taking away sin" ("Lamb of God"). Similarly, L. Michael White argues that John theologically identifies the death of Jesus Messiah as a symbolic slaying of the Paschal lamb (*Scripting Jesus*). The opinion of Mitchell G. Reddish is compellingly useful: John probably drew his lamb imagery from several associated ideas, but shaped his materials and created "a victorious figure who conquers by self-sacrifice," who willingly gives up his life to become "the faithful and true witness" (109).

Noteworthy, the perspicuity of Scripture allows no room for Price's pessimism, but the specificity of Bass and White is also too exclusivist. Reddish's eclecticism with some modification is better. He rightly sees John building his Lamb of God imagery from various sources. But it seems superfluous to conclude that the slain "Lamb in Revelation has conquered by his death, not by violence toward others" and so "the 'wrath' of God is defined by the cross of Christ." By way of application, Christians should not respond to violence against them with violence at all because "God's purposes are ultimately achieved through self-sacrificial love" (Reddish 133-34).

The point of view of the Synoptics' narratives explains this concept of conquering by self-sacrifice and may point to a tradition John also knew. According to the Synoptics, Jesus Messiah presented himself and was understood by his fellow Jews as the redeemer of the world who gave himself as a ransom for all (Mat 20:28; Mk 10:45; cf. 1 Tim 2:6). Going by the synoptic drama, Jesus Messiah defeated the devil in their battle for supremacy over creation when he stooped down and took on humanity and the devil mistook the human Jesus for a weakling and caused his crucifixion. Unknown to Satan, that crucifixion was a trap to the means by which the Messiah would enter the realm of death and destroy its power and thus reclaim his people (Mat 12:29; Mk 3:27); just as while there, he caused the dead held by Hades to get out of that realm of the dead and appear to many in the city (Cf. Mat 27:53).

We are here presented with a kind of "politics of disguise and anonymity that takes place in public view but is designed to have a double meaning or to shield the identity [and intent] of the actors" and it is principally carried out through "Rumor, gossip, folktales, jokes, songs, rituals, codes, and euphemisms" (19). James C. Scott calls it "infrapolitics"—designating "a wide variety of low-profile forms of resistance that dare not speak in their own name" (19). Infrapolitics is most often used by the dominated to overturn power relations in their favour from those who held power over them. One can see that the human Jesus assumed the place of the powerless and dominated and so performed a backstage discourse. It was a strategic pose that accurately hit its target. This is the missing link in the interpretation of Jesus' redemptive sacrificial death typical of Reddish.

As it were, the power battle, though spiritual, involved the physical violent death by crucifixion of the Messiah on the one hand and a reprisal destruction of the enemy on the other, just as Jesus Messiah "was watching Satan

fall from heaven like lightning" (Lk 10:18). By the time John wrote, this spiritual war manifested itself in the physical realm as the enemy was slaying the saints with the sword (Rev 2:13; 6:9; 20:4) and starving others to death through famine (Rev 6:6). Reddish describes this as "a vision of greed and selfishness among the 'haves' who exhibit no concern for the 'have-nots' ... something God hates!" (127) which probably invoked the wrath of God on the wicked. So, the point John is making in Revelation is not for Christians to commit suicide in the guise of self-sacrifice. In biblical literature Christians are called upon to resist the devil (1 Pet 5:8-10; Jas 4:7; Eph 6:11) and this charge denotes physical resistance, even with defensive arms where necessary. This becomes clearer when we do a close reading of passages where John uses the lamb imagery in the book of Revelation in the context of Jesus' activities in the course of his redemptive project.

Lamb in the Book of Revelation

Throughout Revelation, John employs $\alpha\rho\nu\alpha\iota\omicron\nu$ (*arnion*), a diminutive form of $\alpha\rho\nu\alpha$ (*arēn*) which originally meant lambkin, for "lamb", a young male sheep, older than a lambkin but less than two years. *Arnion* was (Jeremias $\alpha\rho\nu\alpha\iota\omicron\nu$ 340). *Amnos* initially referred to a sacrificial lamb and *arēn* for lamb in other contexts (Gess 410). This little difference later disappeared and John employs the imagery as animetaphor for Jesus Messiah reflecting his atoning sacrifice, but probably also the warrior lamb of 1 Enoch and the Testament of Joseph.

On our very first contact with the imagery, we met a lamb standing as if it had been slain; possibly by an opponent in battle? An elder in the heavenly throne precinct identified that lamb as a lion from the tribe of Judah, who is indeed the Root of David (Rev 5:5; cf. TJos 19:8), referencing the personage that has the solution to John's problem. Ironically, however, when John turned, he saw, not the lion he was expecting, but a slain lamb yet standing erect, with only the scars of his slaughter. John came to realise that both images are animetaphors of the same personage; the Messiah he and his community knew. They picture an omnipotent and omniscient conquering warrior Lamb (Rev 5:5-6; 12:11; 17:14), protecting those loyal to him through—though not from—their tribulations, but judging the rebels with lethal plagues and physical destruction as prescribed in his redemption plan document (Rev 6-20). This imagery, like the ram who in the *Testament of Joseph* 19:8 and *1 Enoch* 89:41-50; 90:1-39, represents the conquering Messiah. The curious thing about this Lamb is that "He does away with sin by obliterating the sinners, the wicked enemies of the people of God" (Price 302). Wars are fought that involve the saints and indicate their defensive involvement in the divine judgement acts (Rev 6:1-2).

The events that happen when the Lamb opens each page of the scroll, by breaking its seal, show the highest level of divine violence, which very much resembles a horror movie. One could even see traces of queer and affect treatments of ecological life. For example, in the "ecocidal visions" (Moore 6) of the seven trumpets and seven bowls (especially at Rev 8:7-12; 16:2-12)—as well as the material devastation of the earth and disruptions in the heavenly realms during the opening of the seals, there we have a more penetrative perception of all this when we read Revelation with a culture-linguistic eye in synergy with

empire and postcolonial observations about power relations and discourse. In this light, one is led to see John depicting the Messiah as choosing concealed violence as the means of liberating a colonised people from the stranglehold of their imperial masters. There is clearly a hidden transcript in John's portrait of the Messiah that is best understood in light of the Synoptics' drama discussed above. Just like what happened during the Egyptian exodus where the narrator emphasises the redemption of the people "by a mighty hand" (Exo 32:11; Deu 4:34; 5:15; 6:21; 7:8, 19; 9:26; 11:2; 26:8) which involved the death of all first born, John perceives the Babylonian (Roman) exodus as going to happen through violent means prescribed in the redemption plan document that the Messiah executes. John understands such means as designed by God and if and when deployed appropriately, it does not offend God. Instead, it pleases God that his will is being done on earth as it is in heaven where Michael deployed that violence and dethroned the dragon (Rev 12:7-12). This divine violence is what John describes as the wrath of God and of the Lamb—which occurs in Revelation only in the sections where God is destroying the destroyers of his creation (Rev. 6:16-17; 11:18; 12:12; 14:10, 19; 15:1, 7; 16:1, 19; 19:15). Rightly said, "The 'wrath' of God is God's certain response to the destructive effects of evil in the world" (Reddish 134).

By John's portrait of Jesus Messiah as a Lion-Lamb engaged in the redemption of his people therefore, non-violence is not his concern in this picture of Jesus Messiah as Reddish and others understand him. Throughout Revelation, John presents the Messiah as at a war front (Rev 6:2; 19:11-16). The destruction of large parts of life on earth and in the seas is witnessed in that war with what may be described as "vindictive joy" (Moore 1). The Messiah is all the time executing the redemption plan, which, to be sure, involves schemes of resistance that are ultimately meant to destroy the devil's agents destroy God's world. Guardian angels are often commanded to carry out these destructions (Rev 16:1); and this is normal even in nonviolent direct action for defence just as Nehemiah did to deter enemies (Neh. 4:15-23). Even in our time, George Lakey, who "has facilitated 1,500 workshops on five continents and led activist projects on local, national and international levels" for over six decades recommends that "nonviolent demonstrators should be protected by guardians carrying guns, accompanying protests" to deter enemies ("The Right to Self-Defense"). John therefore does not appear to be presenting Jesus Messiah as a pacifist by the portrait of a Lion who looks like a slain lamb that nevertheless still stands erect. Rather, he seems to be painting a picture of a great warrior who, having known the prowess of his opponent, shrewdly disguises himself as a weakling, and deludes his opponent into taking him for granted so he gets the clear chance to destroy his opponent like pottery.

It seems that the confusion about John's communicative intent on the symbolic imagery of a Lion-Lamb in redemption project is informed by the predominant view among commentators on the book of Revelation that the scroll that the Lamb receives from the Throne Occupant (Rev 5:1) is God's redemption plan *to be executed by the Lamb through his substitutionary self-atoning sacrifice* (Gundry *Commentary on Revelation*; Garland 300; Mounce *Book of Revelation*;

Thomas 378). Empire and postcolonial reading of the text using culture-linguistic lens and observations about power relations and discourse, however, reveal that the scroll is not a redemption plan concerned with atonement. It is rather a blueprint for world government by the Throne Occupant through his Lion-Lamb Prince. This world redemption agenda emphasises not an atoning sacrifice for sin, but God's political steps towards reclaiming the rule of the world from the usurper (cf. Rev 11:15).

This position is informed by the fact that the personage that John depicts as the only one qualified to execute the blueprint contained in the scroll (Rev 5:5), attained that qualification because he had been slain as a paschal lamb and offered as an atonement sacrifice. He served as a substitute for the people of the Throne Occupant (Rev 5:6, 9). From the language relating the vision, atonement and cultic, redemption had already been made and was indeed, the basis for the qualification of the Lamb Prince to receive the scroll, open its seals, and implement its contents. Thus, the scroll contained, not the cultic atoning component of the redemption, but its political aspect. At the time of John's vision and writing, the spiritual aspect is completed, now it is the execution of the physical component of the redemption.

Evaluation of the Data in Light of the Passover and Johannine Theology

From many indications, the Passover lamb provided for John the basic imagery of all his portraits of Jesus Messiah presented above. The Passover was a sacrifice (Exo 12:27) which also, probably, sealed a covenant that consecrated the Israelites as a special people—a priest-nation—for Yahweh (Exo 12:27; 13:15). This is the import of Yahweh's command that the Levites who were to serve at the tent of meeting *shall be cleansed and presented as a wave offering* (Num 8:15-17). This necessitates the removal of sin from the consecrated persons which was achieved by the blood of the sacrificed Passover lamb. Note-worthily, the Passover sacrifice was a substitutionary atonement. Atonement was an act of remission of sin. And as Jon Douglas Levenson rightly points out, according to Exodus 12-13, the blood of the paschal lamb was what shielded Israelite first male offspring from the hand of the Destroyer (50). Yahweh did this because he forbade human sacrifice among men (Lev 18:21; Deut 12:29-31; 18:10; 2 Kgs 17:17; Jer 19:3-5; 32:35).

For Apostle John, this *Akedah* story foreshadowed the substitutionary sacrifice of Yahweh's own beloved son as an atonement for the sin of humanity (Jn 19:14, 31, 36). He follows the lead of John the Dipper who saw Jesus Messiah as that substitute and identified him as "The Lamb of God that has born the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29, 36). In Apostle John's political theology of redemption presented in Revelation, atonement is a necessary, and indeed, central component of the redeeming act of the victorious Lion-Lamb. First, the blood that Jesus Messiah spilled on the cross was to release humanity from sin (Rev 1:5) and to save all believers the judgement acts of the Lamb contained in the scroll (Rev 7:3). The language of a lamb, standing as though it had been slain, is thus simply a reference to the scars he retained from his crucifixion and; the deadly wound the enemy inflicted on him during the battle to save the world that

he decisively won so that John sees him still standing erect. This is how he qualified to save humanity from its seemingly insurmountable war ahead.

To be sure, John's portrait of the Lamb is that of Christ in his redemptive self-sacrifice for the people of God over whom Satan laid unjust claim. But he paints this picture in a royal court context, hence the associated lion imagery which suggests his concern with the takeover of the world's government by the Lamb as symbolised in his receiving of the scroll—the blueprint of world government (Rev. 5:9-10). In Revelation 5:6, John is trying to explicate a paradox in visionary-prophetic style using a picture of Jesus' redemptive activity anchored by self-sacrifice. In Rev. 5:4-14 John characterises redemption from the power of sin as encumbrance to life in the government of God by the image of a Warrior Lamb who eradicates sin by destroying sinners (Price 302). This is God's way of removing sin that distorts and even destroys his creation. The apparent paradox here is that a lamb is a lowly and gentle, passive animal, and this Lamb in the throne precincts is slain, yet he overcomes the tyranny of empire. And this involves violence. In the first place, the slaughter of the Lamb that left him with the scars is an act of violence. And the act of obliterating the enemies of God as Price implies, also involves violence. This comes out very clearly in the opening of the seals and blowing of the trumpets where nature, alongside human and animal life, is violently destroyed in warfare involving the enemies of God and God's people as the contending parties.

The Cross of Jesus Messiah not only took away the guilt of our sin; it also offers us the POWER to triumph over sin by physically doing away with the enemy and, the sinners, to safeguard our holy character. The entire picture is concerned with the heinous sin of apostasy and idolatry. A Roman Emperor was puffed up by his intoxicating desire to deify and to exalt himself as a god to be worshipped by all his subjects (cf. 2 Thess 2:4). The Christian, who recognizes only the God revealed in the person of Jesus Messiah, then became a natural prey to this tyranny. Yet, John assures the believer of the surpassing power of the slain lamb who yet stands erect, ready to devour any who disturbs his people with the power-like of a lion. Most importantly, the Lion-Lamb is there to empower his followers to overcome the enemy just as he did, hence the eight times reference to he who overcomes in Revelation.

So, as it stands, John is in this portrait presenting the true emperor of the world empire, indicated by the Lamb's fullness of power as his seven horns show and fullness of knowledge evidenced in his seven eyes (Rev 5:6). When the seventh angel sounded his trumpet, John heard "loud voices in heaven, saying, 'The empire of the world has become *the empire* of our Lord and of His Messiah; and He will reign forever and ever'" (Rev 11:15). It is in this capacity that the Lamb receives the blueprint of his government, the seven-sealed scroll, and proceeds to govern the world according to its seven-point agenda.

Implications for the Church Militant of Jesus Messiah

What does all this teaching on John's portrait of Jesus Messiah as the world's redeemer, using the imagery of a sacrificial warrior lamb, hold for the Christian in the twenty first century world amidst conspiracy theories of a one-world

government with Satanism as the world religion? Is the Christian community to be yet another sacrificial lamb and offer itself for slaughter by the enemies of the cross? *Μη γενοίτο*. In the first place, God forbade human sacrifice and, in its place, substituted his one and only son who offered a one-time all sufficient self-sacrifice for humanity's redemption. Just as human blood surpasses the blood of bulls and goats, even so divine blood overwhelmingly surpasses human blood (Heb 9:11-14). Thus, no other blood sacrifice is needed any longer for human redemption. Christians are, therefore, not to fold their hands and let themselves be destroyed by the enemies of good. Rather, as the Scriptures clearly state numerous times, the one who endures or resists the hardship of the tribulation until the end will be saved (Mat 12:32; 23:13; 1 Cor 1:8).

What then does it mean to endure to the end? Apostle Peter gives us a clue: "Be of sober *spirit*, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in *your* faith ... After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen *and* establish you" (1 Pet 5:8-10); that is, enable you to overcome. James similarly exhorts, "Submit, therefore, to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you" (Jas 4:7). Paul equally encourages believers not to give the devil an opportunity (Eph 4:27), emphasising that believers should adequately arm themselves for the spiritual war: "Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against *the schemes of the devil*" (Eph 6:11). Paul goes on to explain the necessity for this prepping and action: "For our struggle is ... against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, [and] against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*" (Eph 6:12). John explains that these evil heavenly forces are, nevertheless, represented in the terrestrial phase of the war by humans: "This calls for wisdom. If anyone has insight, let him calculate the number of the beast, *for it is man's number*. That is, it is in a human being but Satan inspired. His number is 666" (Rev 13:18 emphasis added). To a people who are being persecuted with destructive weapons, to resist the enemy means nothing less than active resistance with the sword. Jesus Messiah made this clear: "Then Jesus asked them, 'When I sent you without purse, bag or sandals, did you lack anything?' 'Nothing,' they answered. He said to them, 'But now if you have a purse, take it, and also a bag; *and if you don't have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one*'" (Lk 22:36 emphasis added). This underscores the gravity of the importance of the sword for the follower of the Messiah in this phase of the war. Though the Christian is to bear, not offensive but defensive weapons, in all these, pacifism and apathy are out. This, however, does not mean that this author/researcher is encouraging physical violence. But how really should Christians defend themselves, by prayer or by physically bearing arms?

Conclusion

This study examined the imagery of a Lion-Lamb as world redeemer in John's political tract, the Book of Revelation. The aim was to establish John's communicative intent in the imagery in the face of myriads of interpretations. It

discovered that the predominant view that the Lion-Lamb is an atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world is based on a hermeneutic that disregards John's socio-political context which prompted his production of that tract. Revelation, as John's theology of political and cultural power concerned with crisis and despair among the dominated, is to be interpreted in line with its political theology. Thus, by John's infrapolitics, the Lion-Lamb is his disguised depiction of his community's Messiah as a warrior Lamb Prince scheming to redeem the World Empire from the usurper and bring it back under God's sovereignty. The lion imagery was commonplace designation of power-holders in Ancient Near East. As a prophetic leader of a dominated group therefore, John only hinted at the lion imagery, but then promoted that of the warrior lamb that his community knew well to characterise their Messiah as a conqueror in conquest of the world Empire after making atonement for the sin of the world to spiritually prepare his people for the war that nevertheless is to be fought in the physical realm. The Christian community is by this understanding, called upon to rise up and resist the devil even with defensive weapons where necessary.

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