

## MARTYRDOM AND RESURRECTION IN THE REVELATION TO JOHN<sup>1</sup>

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### *Introduction*

K. Wengst proposes that “in the book of Revelation, John does not speak about the resurrection and ascension of Jesus.”<sup>2</sup> Because his main goal is to discuss the political and historical background of the NT period rather than to give an interpretation of Revelation, Wengst interprets the suffering and death of the Lord as a triumphant resistance and opposition against the Roman emperors. He seems completely unaware of the resurrection metaphors in the book that could weaken his position.<sup>3</sup> He is correct, however, when he points out that, according to Revelation, those who fought with violence and aggression are not the victors; they are the victims.

H. Giesen argues in a similar but less negative way: “The victory of the Lamb is not at first the resurrection but its death.”<sup>4</sup> Thus, the primary goal of the Lamb metaphor is to encourage God’s people who are experiencing suffering and affliction by giving them a chance to identify with Christ,<sup>5</sup> especially in his suffering, struggling, and resurrection. The

<sup>1</sup>This article is derived from a paper presented during the third meeting of the “Department of Biblical Studies, Research Unit New Testament” at the Catholic University Leuven on January 18, 2001. I would like to thank the members of the department for their questions, and my colleagues Maria Duffy and Katrin Hauspie for reading my article for publication. A German version was published under the title “. . . und sie werden Priester Gottes und des Messias sein; und sie werden König sein mit ihm—tausend Jahre lang.” (Offb 20,6). *Martyrium und Auferstehung in der Offenbarung (SNTU Ser.A 26 [2001]: 139-163)*. Unless otherwise indicated, Bible quotations are taken from NRSV.

<sup>2</sup>K. Wengst, *Pax Romana. Anspruch und Wirklichkeit* (München: Kaiser, 1986), 159. Wengst notes: “Johannes redet nirgends davon, daß Jesus auferweckt oder erhöht worden, daß er auferstanden sei.”

<sup>3</sup>The different approaches and methods to the interpretation of Scripture are always incomplete. No one method can comprehend the whole message of a text.

<sup>4</sup>H. Giesen states: “Der Sieg des Lammes besteht somit nicht in erster Linie in der Auferstehung, sondern vor allem in seinem Tod” (“Erlösung im Horizont einer verfolgten Gemeinde. Das Verständnis von Erlösung in der Offenbarung des Johannes,” in *Glaube und Handeln*, hrg., H. Giesen, Bd. 2, Europäische Hochschulstudien. Theologie, 23/215 [Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1983], 43-56, esp. 50).

<sup>5</sup>Cf. N. Baumert, who emphasizes this main goal (*Ein Ruf zur Entscheidung. Aufbau und Botschaft der Offenbarung des Johannes*, in *Die Freude an Gott—unsere Kraft*, ed. J. J. Degenhard

slaughtered Lamb is more than a triumphant and miraculous metaphor; it is a sign of victory for those who suffer.

*Terminology of Resurrection and  
Salvation in Revelation*

John addresses the topic of resurrection with different, unusual, and, at times, singular expressions. The first mention is found in a key theological passage in 1:4-8, with John returning to the topic several times.

Revelation 1:4-8: Christ, the  
Firstborn of the Dead

The phrase ὁ πρωτότοκος τῶν νεκρῶν ("firstborn of the dead"),<sup>6</sup> a hapaxlegomenal phrase, is derived from Ps 88:28 (LXX): "Also I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth." Furthermore, the first words spoken by Christ in the book of Revelation introduce him as the risen Lord (1:18). These passages underscore the importance of resurrection in Revelation.

There is in Rev 1:5 a close connection between the resurrection of Christ, his love for Christians, and their salvation from sins through his blood. Thus, the first time resurrection is mentioned in Revelation, it is combined with the idea of salvation, thereby providing the hermeneutical key for understanding the concept of salvation in the book.<sup>7</sup> The typical NT combination of resurrection with promises of the kingdom and the priesthood of believers occurs prominently at the beginning of the book.

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[Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1991], 197-210). The identification of Christians with the suffering Lord is drawn by A. Satake, "Christologie in der Johannesapokalypse im Zusammenhang mit dem Problem des Leidens der Christen," in *Anfänge der Christologie*, ed. C. Breitenbach and H. Paulsen (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1991), 307-322.

<sup>6</sup>Cf. πρωτότοκος, Col 1:18, where there is a combining of ἀρχή and πρωτότοκος (ὅς ἐστιν ἀρχή, πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν); and Heb 12:23.

<sup>7</sup>The hermeneutical key for the historical background of Revelation can be found in the seven letters to the churches of Asia Minor—therefore, the theological and soteriological key is 1:4-7, particularly v. 5, which consists of two parts: the christological basis and the soteriological consequence. Cf. E. Schüssler-Fiorenza, *Priester für Gott. Studien zum Herrschafts- und Priestermotiv in der Apokalypse*, NtAbh.NF, 7 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1972) 155-166. The love of Christ, his act of liberating believers from their sins, and their transformation into a kingdom and priesthood has its cause in Christ's resurrection, which is a faithful sign of his witness and ruling position over the kings of the earth. Cf. J. Ramsey Michaels, who interprets Rev 1:10 as a key for the whole text ("Revelation 1.9 and the Narrative Voices of the Apocalypse," *NTS* 37 [1991]: 604-620).

Revelation 1:9-20: "The Living One"  
Who "Was Dead"

It is not surprising that resurrection is also combined with the vocation of John.<sup>8</sup> The "encounter narrative" between John and the Lord, and John's calling as a prophet are expressed by John's double-take in response to meeting the risen Lord (1:12; "I turned to see . . . , on turning I saw"). The same verb, *στρέφω*, is used in the Gospel of John to describe Mary Magdalene's reaction to encountering Jesus after his resurrection (John 20:14, 16).<sup>9</sup> D. Pezzoli-Olgiati interprets this double turning as a condition for attaining another viewpoint of the risen Lord.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, before John receives a prophetic message for the seven churches in Asia Minor, he encounters the risen Lord. His reaction of fear and falling before Christ and the Lord's response to him—"Do not be afraid" (e.g., Jer 1:8; Ezek 2:6; Ruth 3:11; Luke 1:13, 30)—are typical elements of a vocation narrative,<sup>11</sup> which is here combined with the experience of resurrection.

In these first words spoken by the Lord in Revelation, Christ is revealed as "the living one" who "was dead" but is now "alive forever" and who has "the keys of death and Hades" (1:18; cf. Isa 22:22).<sup>12</sup> Thus, Christ draws attention to his divinity by speaking of his resurrection.<sup>13</sup>

John's encounter with the risen Lord is closely connected to his situation as a prisoner on the island of Patmos. As he shares in "the persecution and the kingdom and the patient endurance" on account of "the word of God and the testimony of Jesus" (1:9), he can draw a correlation between his own experience as a persecuted servant of Christ, and that of the persecuted church of Asia Minor. He identifies himself

<sup>8</sup>The best example is that of the conversion of Paul in Acts 9:1-22; 22:5-16; 26:12-18; see also the narrative of Mary Magdalene at the tomb of Jesus (John 20:1-18).

<sup>9</sup>D. Pezzoli-Olgiati, *Täuschung und Klarheit. Zu Wechselwirkung zwischen Vision und Geschichte in der Johannesoffenbarung*, FRLANT, 175 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1997), 27-29.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>11</sup>For further discussion of scriptural vocation narratives, see G. Fischer and M. Hasitschka, *The Call of the Disciple: The Bible on Following Christ*, trans. M. J. O'Connell (New York: Paulist Press, 1999).

<sup>12</sup>G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 215.

<sup>13</sup>For further reference to the presence of Jesus Christ in Revelation, see J. L. Resseguie, *Revelation Unsealed: A Narrative Critical Approach to John's Apocalypse*, Biblical Interpretation Series, 32 (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 111-116; see esp. reference to the Lamb, 113).

with these churches, calling himself a brother and companion.<sup>14</sup> He lives in the same isolation as those Christians who made firm decisions against the Roman Emperor cult (cf. the church of Smyrna, Rev 2:8-11). Thus, John does not use the idea of resurrection as a means of escape from reality, but rather as a reason to rejoice in suffering as Christians follow the example of Christ.

#### Revelation 2:8: "The Words of the First and Last, Who Died and Came to Life"

The introduction in the letter to the church of Smyrna, "the words of the first and the last, who died and came to life" (2:8), is meant to show correspondence between the suffering and death of Christ and those believers who were also suffering affliction, poverty, slander, and a fear of imprisonment. The Christians in this city especially needed the support that this message of resurrection brought. John asks them to be faithful until death so that they will receive the crown of life (v.10)—another metaphor for resurrection in Revelation. Thus, life (ζωή) in the Johannine sense is closely linked to resurrection. It has an eternal aspect. Verse 11 makes this clear when it expresses hope in not being harmed by the second death. The combination of the motifs of suffering, death, resurrection, and life are typical of Revelation.<sup>15</sup>

#### Revelation 5:6, 9, 10, 12: A Lamb Standing As If It Had Been Slaughtered, Having Seven Horns and Seven Eyes

The Lamb (ἀρνίου) is one of the most remarkable christological titles in Revelation. It occurs 28 times, stressing the humanity of Christ and providing an example of nonviolent resistance and almighty power.<sup>16</sup> In addition, these 28 quotations symbolically point toward the complete and worldwide victory of the Lamb.<sup>17</sup> The OT background of exodus and delivery from slavery in Egypt is echoed in Revelation, where the Lamb is a symbol of deliverance from the evils of Satan and a sign of participation in God's kingdom.

<sup>14</sup>Note the link to 6:11: οἱ σύνδουλοι αὐτῶν καὶ οἱ ἀδελφοὶ αὐτῶν.

<sup>15</sup>Cf. esp. Rev 2:8-11; 20:4-6.

<sup>16</sup>L. L. Johns emphasizes the stance of nonviolent resistance (*The Lamb in the Rhetorical Program of the Apocalypse of John*, in *SBLSPS* 37 [1998]: 762-784); and M. Carrez, who underlines the victory of the Lamb in the narrative development in Revelation ("Le déploiement de la christologie de l'Agneau dans l'Apocalypse," *RPR* 79 [1999]: 5-17).

<sup>17</sup>Resseguie, 113, emphasizes only the humanity of the Lamb. But the metaphor in Rev 5:6-9 also contains the aspects of the Lamb who was slaughtered and resurrected.

This message is prefaced in the previous verse with the introduction of the “Lion of the tribe of Judah” and the King David metaphors (Rev 5:5), which are symbols of power and victory.<sup>18</sup> Taken from the OT (Gen 49:9; Isa 11:1, 10), they serve as messianic metaphors in the targumic and other Jewish Scriptures as well,<sup>19</sup> and underscore the christological title of the Lamb.

The opposite metaphor of the beast is important in this context. The beast is described as having “one of his heads as if it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed” (Rev 13:3, 12). In keeping with John’s dualistic thinking, it is not surprising that he also uses the characterization of the beast being slaughtered and healed to show the contrast between it and the Lamb—the mortal wound of the beast was healed (ἐθεραπεύθη). The verb θεραπεύω is never used in the NT for resurrection; generally it refers to healing from illness. Therefore, the difference between the risen Lamb and the healed beast is obvious—reconciliation, salvation, and resurrection are dependent on the death of the Lamb.

Thus, the concept of “resurrection,” which is further developed in the first vision of Revelation, is closely related to liturgy<sup>20</sup>—kingdom and priesthood, liberation, and salvation. The fact that resurrection is not concealed in a less important pericope but is present in the opening vision of Revelation, provides a key hermeneutical function for the vision narratives.

### Revelation 6:9-11: Under the Altar, the Souls of Those Who Had Been Slaughtered

Resurrection terminology is only alluded to in this pericope, where the souls beneath the altar ask how long they must endure until God’s judgment. The concept of resurrection is present in the verb κρίνει (“to judge, pass judgment on”). The verb κρίνω and its accompanying nouns occur in connection with God’s judgment and salvation in Revelation.<sup>21</sup> The combination of this motif of suffering with the indictment of 18:24 makes clear the need for judgment: “and in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.” The same verb, σφάζω (“to slaughter, to put to death”), is used to describe Christians (6:9), the suffering Lamb of God (5:6, 9; 13:8), and the

<sup>18</sup>For reference to this paradoxical connection, see M. Hasitschka, “Überwunden hat der Löwe aus dem Stamm Juda” (Offb 5,5). Funktion und Herkunft des Bildes vom Lamm in der Offenbarung des Johannes,” *ZKT* 116 (1994): 487-493.

<sup>19</sup>Beale, 349, refers to Targ. Neof. and Targ. Ps.-J. of Gen 49:9-12 and Midr. Tanhuma Gen 12:12; Midr. Rag Gen 97:4.

<sup>20</sup>For the hymns of the heavenly liturgy in Rev 4 and 5, see J.-P. Ruiz, “Revelation 4:8-11; 5:9-14: Hymns of the Heavenly Liturgy,” *SBLSP* 34 (1995): 216-220.

<sup>21</sup>Cf. 6:10; 14:7; 16:7; 17:1; 18:8, 10, 20; 19:2, 11; 20:4.

slaughtered beast (13:3, the opposite metaphor of the Lamb).

Resurrection is also mentioned in 6:11. First, it contains another symbol of salvation, the white robe (στολή λευκή) that covers Christians (cf. especially the wedding clothes, 19:7-9) as a sign of their righteous deeds. Second, the suffering Christians are advised to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and martyred brothers and sisters is complete. This time limit can be found elsewhere in Revelation and it is always a sign of hope (e.g., 2:10; 11:3, 9, 11; 12:6).

#### Revelation 20:4, 5, 6: Resurrection for Whom?

The two most important themes of Rev 20:1-6 are “rule” or “reign” (vv. 4, 6) and “life” (vv. 4-5). First, in regard to “rule,” Rev 20:1-6 is closely linked with Rev 12:7-11.<sup>22</sup> The close connection between resurrection and judgment against Satan (20:1-3) on behalf of God’s people can be seen in 20:4 (κρίμα ἐδόθη).<sup>23</sup>

Second, in regard to “life,” Rev 12:5 refers to God’s protection of his son, while 20:4-6 points to the resurrection of believers. Closely linked with Rev 20:4-6 is the imagery of resurrection as a giving back (ἔδωκεν) of the dead from the sea (ἡ θάλασσα), from death (ὁ θάνατος), and from Hades (ὁ ᾗδης).<sup>24</sup> The connection between resurrection and judgment (cf. 20:12, ἐκρίθησαν οἱ νεκροὶ; 20:13, ἐκρίθησαν) cannot be overlooked in this pericope.<sup>25</sup>

#### Revelation 21:4: Death Will Be No More

The function of the final visions of the heavenly Jerusalem, prepared as a bride<sup>26</sup> for her bridegroom coming down from heaven, is to underline the main goal of Revelation—the exhortation and encouragement of God’s people to remain faithful in following the Lamb’s paradoxical

<sup>22</sup>For a discussion of the genre of Rev 20:1-6, see V. Sheridan Poythress, “Genre and Hermeneutics in Rev 20:1-6,” *JETS* 36 (1993): 41-54.

<sup>23</sup>It is not clear who those sitting on the throne are. The different interpretations that have been proposed include martyrs, God’s people, the angelic court, and exalted believers along with angels (Beale, 996).

<sup>24</sup>The combination ὁ θάνατος . . . ὁ ᾗδης (20:13) also occurs in 1:18; 6:8; 20:14.

<sup>25</sup>R. Bauckham, “Resurrection as Giving Back the Dead,” in *The Fate of the Dead: Studies on the Jewish and Christian Apocalypses*, ed. R. Bauckham (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 269-289.

<sup>26</sup>Cf. U. Sim, who presents the idea of a city in ancient times (*Das himmlische Jerusalem in Apk 21,1-22,5 im Kontext biblisch-jüdischer Tradition und antiken Städtebaus*, Bochumer Altertumswissenschaftliches Colloquium, 25 [Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag, 1996]); and P. Söllner, *Jerusalem, die hochgebaute Stadt. Eschatologisches und Himmlisches Jerusalem im Frühjudentum und im frühen Christentum*, TANZ, 25 (Tübingen: Francke, 1998).

example. The description of the city as holy points to the relationship between God and his people, while the symbolism of the city as a beautiful bride highlights an aspect of purity and love.<sup>27</sup>

Wengst emphasizes the close comparison between the holy Jerusalem and the whore Babylon. The same metaphors are used to describe the heritage of violence associated with Babylon and the promises of salvation found in Scripture. From his political point of view, Wengst criticizes this use of common imagery, positing that salvation, if understood from such a perspective, would be only an exchange of victors and losers—both groups desiring to attain ultimate power.<sup>28</sup> Wengst's observation is correct—there are similarities between the visions of Babylon and Jerusalem. In addition, the limitation of human expectation of salvation is also noticeable in Revelation. However, Wengst denies the presence of resurrection terminology in the book.<sup>29</sup>

The metaphor of the suffering and slaughtered Lamb especially draws attention to another reality of life and salvation: avoiding might, power, and hostility is the most significant Christian sign of salvation. Thus, while the vision of the holy Jerusalem is limited in regard to what it tells us of salvation, it does emphasize the message that finally there will be no more death, mourning, crying, or pain (cf. 7:17).<sup>30</sup> The end of death, which is not exclusive to a specific group, underlines the hope for resurrection.

### Resurrection and Salvation: Christians as Priests and Kings

The most important text for Christians concerning the kingdom and priesthood is Rev 20:6. However, this verse must be interpreted in the context of 1:5-6 and 5:9-10. Additionally, the OT background for priesthood is found in Isa 61:6-10, which is also important for understanding the meaning of the wedding clothes in Rev 19:7-8 (cf. Isa 61:10, MT).<sup>31</sup>

<sup>27</sup>Pezzoli-Olgiatei, 166f.

<sup>28</sup>Wengst, 161f.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 159.

<sup>30</sup>The opposite reality is depicted by the whore Babylon (cf. 18:7-8), which is a symbol of infidelity, distrust, and disbelief, as well as the connection between the love of riches, power, and unauthentic communication. This is true not only of Babylon, but also of all those who are associated with her. Cf. J. Ellul, *Apocalypse: The Book of Revelation* (New York: Seabury, 1977), 190f.

<sup>31</sup>Beale, 938. F. J. Murphy refers to Exod 19:6 as OT background. According to his thesis, priests are the part of humanity that is fit to come into God's presence, and thus they are the locus of God's effective sovereignty in the world (*Fallen is Babylon: The Revelation to John*, *The New Testament in Context* [Harrisburg: Trinity, 1998], 399ff.).

E. Schüssler-Fiorenza<sup>32</sup> notes that the priesthood according to Isa 61:6 does not contain a relation to JHWH and his ministry, although she underlines the cultic meaning of *λειτουργοὶ θεοῦ*. Rather, she interprets the priesthood in Isa 61:6 in connection with the privileged position of Israel among the nations and the “pilgrimage of peoples towards Jerusalem.”<sup>33</sup>

I cannot agree with this position. A contextual interpretation of Isa 61:6-10 clearly shows the ministry dimension of priesthood. Schüssler-Fiorenza does not account for the fact that the initiative of the bridegroom is described as that of a priest (יכהן) and that his response is due to his joy in God. Verse 10, which contains three parallelisms, demonstrates this. The first two parallels refer to joy in God (שׂושׁ אִישׁ בִּיהוָה חָנַל נַפְשׁוֹ בְּאֵלֵהוּ), with the second giving two reasons for this (both introduced by כִּי): God clothes the recipient of liberation with garments of salvation and covers him with the robe of righteousness (הַלְבִישֵׁנִי בְּדִרְיִישׁעִמְעִיל צְדָקָה יַעֲשֵׂנִי). Thus, the priesthood according to Isaiah means, first, joy in God in response to his prearranged salvation from injustice and wickedness (cf. the primary commandment in Isa 56:1: שְׂמְרוּ מִשְׁפַּט וְעֲשׂוּ צְדָקָה). The priesthood is developed from and has a primary function of the idea of relationship toward God. The clothes mentioned in this context are a visible symbolic expression of received salvation and the righteousness of God.<sup>34</sup> The last parallel (in 61:10) compares the joy found in God to being adorned with ornaments and jewels as a bride and bridegroom (וּכְבִלְהָ חֲעֻדָּה כְּלִיָּהּ). The action of the bridegroom, along with the ornamentation of the bride and bridegroom, are expressed in priestly terms (מִשְׁרָחֵי אֱלֹהֵינוּ [Isa 61:6] MT; *λειτουργοὶ θεοῦ*, LXX).<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup>Schüssler-Fiorenza, 158, states: “Das Priestertum Israels wird in der Verheißung Tritojesajas also nicht in bezug auf Jahwe und seinen Dienst gesehen, sondern hinsichtlich seiner privilegierten Stellung innerhalb der Völkerwelt herausgestellt.” There is an inconsistency in her interpretation. On the one hand, she underlines the use of cultic terminology, but, on the other hand, avoids the priestly motive for serving God.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 160-166.

<sup>34</sup>Rev 5:10 provides an important argument for connecting the priesthood with joyous service to God. The four living creatures and the twenty-four elders praise God with a new song in recognition that the Lamb has made them to be a kingdom and priests. Beale, 312f, refers to this vision as a “heavenly liturgy and pattern for the Church’s liturgy” because it incorporates significant elements from both Jewish and Christian backgrounds. Thus, in addition to Isa 61:6-10, these two pericopes help to provide the background for the interpretation of Rev 20:6.

<sup>35</sup>Cf. U. Berges, who refers to יכהן פאר (*Das Buch Jesaja: Komposition und Endgestalt*, HBS, 16 [Freiburg, Herder, 1998], 454). He states: “Hier ist die Vorstellung von einer ‘priesterlichen’ Zukunft (61,4-9) mit der zukünftigen Hochzeitsfreude (62,4-5) verbunden worden. [. . .] Es ist das Stichwort ‘Turban’, das sowohl den Gegensatz von Freude und Trauer (61,3; vgl. Jes 3,20; Ez 24,17,23) als auch die priesterliche Kleidung kennzeichnet (Ex 39,28; Ez 44,18), womit alle Belege

This ministry dimension of priesthood is also found in the quotation of ἱερείς (“priests”) in Rev 1:6.<sup>36</sup> The goal of the kingdom and priesthood is to reflect the glory and dominion of God (cf. Rev 1:6: αὐτῷ ἡ δόξα καὶ τὸ κράτος εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας [τῶν αἰώνων] ἀμήν).

According to Revelation, the idea of priesthood, in which those who are priests serve in God’s presence, is contrasted with those who suffer the second death and will, thus, be isolated from God forever (cf. 20:10, 14-15; 21:3, 7-8; 22:14-15). Priesthood also indicates a further participation on the part of believers (cf. 1:6: ἐποίησεν ἡμᾶς; 5:9: ἠγόρασας τῷ θεῷ; 20:6: ὁ ἔχων μέρος) in Christ, in his love (1:5), slaughtering, and passion (5:9), and in his resurrection (20:6) in order to receive liberation from sin (1:5). Thus, the final goal of the priesthood is life in God (5:9: ἠγόρασας τῷ θεῷ), which is expressed by adoration and praise (5:9: ᾄδουσιν ᾠδὴν καινὴν).<sup>37</sup> Christians share in the life of the Lord through baptism (the theological key verse<sup>38</sup>

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in der hebräischen Bibel genannt sind. In 61,10 sind beide Verwendungsbereiche kombiniert: Zions Wandlung von Trauer zur Freude (61,1-3) drückt sich darin aus, daß sie ‘priestergleich’ (*M. Buber*) den Turban trägt und wie die Braut ihr Geschmeide anlegt.”

<sup>36</sup>Schüssler-Fiorenza, 227, comes to the conclusion that “eine weitere, theologisch-inhaltliche Bestimmung des Begriffes ist jedoch vom Kontext der Apk her nicht möglich.” The term ἱερείς (“priests”) serves only as a title for Christians in Revelation. Thus, it is not defined in relation to the three relevant pericopes containing ἱερείς discussed above; nor does Revelation speak about the priestly function of Christians. “Doch sind diese [gottesdienstlichen Handlungen und Funktionen] immer himmlischer oder eschatologischer Art und können daher nicht von den irdischen Christen, den ἱερείς, vollzogen werden” (ibid, 228). An important argument against this eschatological interpretation of priesthood is the use of the past tense in 1:6 (ἐποίησεν) and in 5:10 (ἐποίησας). Only 20:6 has the future aspect in connection with priesthood (ἔσονται). Furthermore, the heavenly scenes reflect actions on earth—the battles between good and evil and the adoration of God.

<sup>37</sup>See the hymns of Revelation, which interrupt the action on earth, i.e., the fight between good and evil. They have the capacity of being “show-stoppers” (cf. J. W. Watts, *Psalm and Story: Inset Hymns in Hebrew Narrative*, JSOTSupp, 139 [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press 1992], 187). For a discussion of the function of hymns in Revelation, see K.-P. Jörens, *Das hymnische Evangelium. Untersuchungen zu Aufbau, Funktion und Herkunft der hymnischen Stücke in der Johannesoffenbarung*, StNT, 5 (Gütersloh, Mohn 1971). Wegst, 166, comes to the conclusion that the prayer service is an exercise to celebrate resistance. For the political aspect of these hymns, see R. S. Smith, “Worthy is the Lamb” and Other Songs of Revelation,” *CibMi* 25 (1998): 500-506. R. P. Stevens finds that contemplation is a main goal in Revelation (“Poems for People in Distress: The Apocalypse of John and the Contemplative Life,” *Them* 18 [1993]: 11-14); also J. A. Du Rand, who points out that the hymns have the function of interpretative commentaries. Revelation is, thus, a good example for seeing the link between contemplation and politics (“Now the Salvation of Our God Has Come. . .” A Narrative Perspective on the Hymns in Revelation 12-15,” *Neotest* 27 [1993]: 313-350).

<sup>38</sup>Giesen, 56. Salvation contains two aspects: the individual liberation from sins, and the universal aspect of ransom of all people and nations for God.

of Revelation [1:5-6] is a baptismal formula<sup>39</sup>).

The second promise of salvation in this section is that of the realization of the kingdom and the reign of the saved for a thousand years. The meaning of king/reign/reigning has a positive meaning when it is combined with God, Christ (1:9; 11:15; 12:10; 15:3; 17:14; 19:16), and the eternal life of Christians (1:6; 5:10; 20:6; 22:5). By contrast, the earthly kings mentioned here are described with the same metaphor, but with negative aspects;<sup>40</sup> thus, their reign is limited. There is no indication that Christians will reign during their earthly life. Rather, reigning is closely linked with Christ (22:5). His kingdom does not include hypocrisy.<sup>41</sup> Nowhere in Revelation is the reign of Christians connected with self-righteous judging.<sup>42</sup> Justice is reserved for God alone (cf. 15:3; 16:5-7; 19:2.11). Salvation, the life of Christ, and redemption are what transform Christians into a kingdom and priesthood.

### *Conclusion*

K. Wengst's thesis that there is an absence of resurrection language in Revelation has been found to be untrue. Rather, John spoke frequently about the resurrection of Jesus Christ, although he generally did not use traditional NT terminology. The typical word for resurrection in the NT, *ἀνάστασις*, appears only twice in Revelation in combination with *πρώτη* (Rev 20:5-6: *ἡ ἀνάστασις ἡ πρώτη*). John used other terms for this topic because in his communication with the seven churches he wanted to relate the concept of resurrection to the local (and often persecutory) situations of his addressees.

Further, the concept of resurrection in Revelation means participation in God's kingdom and priesthood. The OT background for priesthood is the book of Isaiah, which develops its general meaning—joy in God, which is a direct result of a close and bidirectional relationship not limited to a special group of persons, but available to all who will accept the invitation of Rev 22:17 (NIV): "The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life."

Finally, resurrection is a sign of God's justice for those who believe in him. God will also render justice upon those who have persecuted his chosen ones by giving them the second death and banishing them from his presence.

<sup>39</sup>Schüssler-Fiorenza, 212-236.

<sup>40</sup>Cf. 6:15; 9:11; 10:11; 16:10, 12, 14; 17:2, 9, 12, 17, 18; 18:3-9; 19:18-19 (21:24 has a positive aspect).

<sup>41</sup>Giesen, 55.

<sup>42</sup>In Revelation, sitting on the throne points to an aspect of judgment also found in Matt 19:28 and Luke 22:30. In the Synoptics, judgment is related to service (cf. Luke 22:27) and following Jesus' example of poverty (Matt 19:23-26). The same connection can be found in Revelation—only the confessors sit on the throne as judges.